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***An Audience with the Queen:
Subversion, Submission and Survival in Three Late Elizabethan
Progress Entertainments***

By

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For Brian, with love

*Though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better, yet for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself.*

(The Merchant of Venice, III.2.150-53)

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Warwick, July 1999

DECLARATION

All the material submitted in this thesis is new and has not been used before. However, Chapter II is based on work completed for an MA dissertation written in 1992.

Although a substantial part of the research carried out for this thesis builds on previous work, the eleven chapters, or parts thereof, submitted here have not appeared in print before.

SUMMARY

Three late Elizabethan progress entertainments are being discussed: Cowdray (August 1591), Elvetham (September 1591), and Harefield (July 1602).

The Elvetham entertainment has received some critical attention and is comparatively well known due to the extraordinary preparations undertaken for the royal visit, and the fact that a woodcut of an artificial crescent-shaped, lake especially dug for the occasion, has survived. The other two entertainments have been somewhat neglected, and Harefield survives only in fragmentary form. To my knowledge, its text has never been printed *in toto*, and the thesis will include a transcript of the original manuscript housed in Warwickshire County Record Office.

The traditional view that progress entertainments were pastoral tales whose main purpose was to consolidate and confirm existing class structures is challenged. Entertainments are rather complex fictions that serve not merely to establish and preserve the 'beautiful relation' between Queen and her subjects, highborn as well as lowly. These occasions were also very much sites for the exercise of power, by monarch and hosts alike. When examining these festivities in their historical and political contexts and illuminating their hosts' backgrounds, significant new interpretations, or at least possible alternative readings, may be found. Most importantly, the entertainments have to be viewed holistically, as events rather than as the texts that have come down to us.

The hosts of the first two entertainments were powerful peers who were politically suspect from the regime's point of view. Both these lords, on the other hand, had little reason to love the regime because they had been harassed. Despite this state of affairs, traditional interpretations still maintain that both entertainments were submissive in tenor; that their hosts regarded the royal visit as an honour, and tried to (re)gain the Queen's favour through the spectacles that they were putting on. I would claim that these pageants are far more complex affairs and have to be read on different levels of signification. Far from being submissive, these fetes can be interpreted as challenging the existing order, if not indeed actively trying to subvert it.

Having said that, there are country welcomes that seem to conform to the more traditional view of progress entertainments. The third pageant at Harefield was offered by a top-ranking Elizabethan official whose relationship with the Queen was presumably more amicable. Her visit to him was probably intended as a sign of favour, and his motivation in hosting the entertainment may well have been the consolidation of his own position within her close circle of councillors. He would have aimed at maintaining the existing order rather than challenge it; at establishing a 'beautiful relation' between all classes. These conclusions can only be drawn, however, once the event as a whole has been studied as well as the surviving fragments of text.

List of Abbreviations

Add.	Addenda (to Calendar of State Papers)
AHR	American Historical Review
APC	Acts of the Privy Council
BIHR	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
BL	British Library
CJH	Canadian Journal of History
CQ	Critical Quarterly
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
CSP Span.	Calendar of State Papers, Spanish
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
EHR	English Historical Review
ELH	English Literary History
ELR	English Literary Renaissance
HJ	Historical Journal
HLQ	Huntington Library Quarterly
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HT	History Today
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JHI	Journal of the History of Ideas
JMRS	Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies
L&A	List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth
MP	Modern Philology

N&Q	Notes and Queries
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
P&P	Past and Present
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
PRO	Public Record Office
Rech	Recusant History
RenD	Renaissance Drama
Rep.	Representations
RES	Review of English Studies
RORD	Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama
RQ	Renaissance Quarterly
SAQ	South Atlantic Quarterly
SCJ	Sixteenth Century Journal
SEL	Studies in English Literature
ShQ	Shakespeare Quarterly
SP	State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth (in the Public Record Office)
Suss.Arch. Coll.	Sussex Archaeological Collections
TLS	Times Literary Supplement
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
TRP	Tudor Royal Proclamations

To save space, all CSPD references throughout this thesis will be abbreviated in the following way:

CSPD 1547-80	CSPD I
CSPD 1581-90	CSPD II
CSPD 1591-4	CSPD III
CSPD 1595-7	CSPD IV
CSPD 1598-1601	CSPD V
CSPD 1601-3, with add., 1547-65	CSPD VI
CSPD Addenda 1566-79	CSPD VII
CSPD 1603-1610 (James I)	CSPD VIII
CSPD Addenda 1580-1625	CSPD XII

INTRODUCTION

*I like to have a thing suggested rather than told in full. When every detail is given,
the mind
rests satisfied, and the imagination loses the desire to use its own wings.*
(Thomas Aldrich, *Leaves from a Notebook*)

Curtis Bright has recently pointed out that, in an essay on new historicism in 1989, Louis Montrose shows himself concerned that

the terms in which the problem of ideology has been posed and is now circulating in Renaissance literary studies --namely as an opposition between "containment" and "subversion"-- are so reductive, polarized, and undynamic as to be of little conceptual value. A closed and static, singular and homogeneous notion of ideology must be succeeded by one that is heterogeneous and unstable, permeable and processual.¹

Montrose's critique and proposed solution seem valid and commonsensical, yet they are only infrequently practised, and nowhere less than in the discussion of Renaissance elite ceremonies. For years scholars from David Bergeron to Jean Wilson have told us that the Elizabethan royal progress was a conservative exercise. Progress entertainments are viewed fairly consistently as versions of what William Empson termed 'the beautiful relation', in this case between the Queen and her aristocracy.²

This variation on the 'containment' theory presupposes ideas about the possessing classes that are highly debatable, namely that there was hierarchical solidarity rather than elite competition; aristocratic subservience rather than self-assertion; that a royal visit was honorific rather than politically calculated.

¹ 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture', in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 15-36.

² For the 'beautiful relation' see William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 11.

Bright argues that progresses and progress entertainments must be approached particularly, not monolithically; historically, not generically. Above all, they should be viewed with a sense of Renaissance courtly practice in mind, especially those covert communications, for example, as detailed by George Puttenham:

[the courtier ... should] dissemble his conceits as well as his countenances, so as he never speake as he thinkes, or thinke as he speaks, and ... in any matter of importance his words his meaning seldome meete.³

In the introduction to the Woodstock entertainment of 1575 we are told that

... if you mark the woords with this present world, or were acquainted with the state of the devises, you shoulde finde no lesse hidden then uttered, and no lesse uttered then shoulde deserve a double reading over, even of those ... that have disposed their houres to the study of great matters.⁴

Elizabeth Pomeroy, in her discussion of the “Rainbow Portrait”, speaks of the ‘multiple layers of representation and imagination’ inherent in the picture, and it is indeed universally accepted that this and other depictions of Elizabeth are highly complex.⁵ We can be certain that every detail, whether it be the embroidery on the Queen’s dress, the jewels she is wearing, an apparently casual attribute, or even the background, has emblematic significance and can be “read”. All the more surprising, therefore, that progress entertainments have not been studied on the same premise.

What applies to Elizabethan portraiture surely must be equally valid for entertainment texts. Surely they too are polysemous and consist of multiple layers. It is up to us to unravel these layers, or at least give the entertainments --the event

³ *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), ed. Edward Arber (London: Murray, 1869), p. 250.

⁴ J.W. Cunliffe, ‘The Queenes Majesties Entertainment at Woodstocke’, *PMLA*, 26 (1911), 93.

⁵ Quoted in Daniel Fischlin, ‘Political Allegory, Absolute Ideology and the “Rainbow Portrait” of Queen Elizabeth I’, *RQ*, 50 (1997), 178, n.5.

rather than the text-- the 'double reading over' recommended in the introduction to the Woodstock entertainment, if we want to understand them fully.

It is possible to analyse Elizabethan ceremony by establishing historical contexts and focusing not on the (usually) unproblematic surface of the particular event/text but on covert suggestions open to denial.⁶ An elite ceremony like a progress entertainment was a site for the exercise of power, by the Queen and equally by her lords. On these occasions, aristocrats who might not otherwise have gained access to the royal ear were given a voice.

Anne Somerset has recently pointed out that the Queen's visit to a town might yield solid advantages if properly exploited:

... obviously, a note of discontent could not be allowed to mar the proceedings, but all the loyal speeches of welcome and flattering rhetoric afforded excellent opportunities for articulating grievances, and municipal authorities knew how to make the most of these.⁷

I would claim that this statement equally appertains to the occasions when Elizabeth descended upon the estate of one of her noblemen. Progress entertainments were seized upon as a means to advance hidden agendas, by host and Queen alike, and elite entertainments in particular did not function on a single level of signification. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that their sole purpose was to honour and compliment the monarch. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that a royal visit was necessarily meant to honour a particular host.

Louis Montrose has described Elizabethan entertainments as 'social dramas'. A basic feature of these state spectacles was that the various entertainments were

⁶ Curtis C. Bright, 'Caressing the Great: Viscount Montague's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Cowdray, 1591', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 127 (1989), 148.

⁷ *Elizabeth I* (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 373.

framed within a larger social drama. Performers, writers and artisans, sponsors, the Queen and her entourage as well as the spectators; all were participants in the same 'drama':

... progresses and their entertainments did not serve the interests of the Queen and her government exclusively, they also proffered occasions and instruments to those in pursuit of offices and honors, gifts and pensions, influence and power. In other words, the symbols of celebration could be manipulated to serve simultaneously a variety of mutual interests and self-interests.⁸

An entertainment was very often both public (to a certain extent) and subject to publication. Consequently, it was always devised with different 'audiences' in mind: the Queen, her courtiers and councillors, the local dignitaries, the retainers and tenants of the host, the commoners. In the case of the Cowdray entertainment of August 1591, it has even been suggested that there may have been an "audience" abroad in the shape of Father Parsons, the leader of the Jesuit mission.⁹

The Duke of Newcastle's advice to Charles II after the Restoration to revive Elizabethan-style progresses as a politic way to 'please (the) People both Greate and smale, -& to caress the greate ones that hath power in their severall Counties' reflects how effective a means of propaganda progresses were regarded to be.¹⁰ This is a shrewd assessment of the general politics of progresses and the political conditions which resulted in particular choices.

⁸ Louis A. Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes", and the Pastoral of Power', in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 51.

⁹ *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan*, ed. A.G. Petti (London: Catholic Record Society 52, 1959), p. 79.

¹⁰ See *A Catalogue of Letters and Other Historical Documents Exhibited in the Library at Welbeck*, ed. S.A. Strong (London: Murray, 1903), p. 226.

Existing Research

In view of the fact that nearly every other aspect of Queen Elizabeth's life has been explored, analysed and reinterpreted from psychological, feminist, and new historicist angles, to name just a few, surprisingly little in-depth research has been undertaken on the pageants that were offered to Elizabeth during her summer progresses.

Progress entertainments, if they are regarded as conservative exercises, aiming primarily at establishing and preserving a 'beautiful relation' between the Queen and her subjects, are indeed not worthwhile research topics. However, this seems to be the prevalent view of these festivities. Beyond that, they are at best credited with the objective of propagating the so-called "cult" of Elizabeth while they provided the Queen with a summer holiday at her hosts' expense and the opportunity to see parts of her realm outside the capital.¹¹

Most biographies of Elizabeth --on average, one per year is published-- mention the progresses either not at all or *en passant*.¹² The most recent biography, Alison Weir's *Elizabeth the Queen*, is an exception in that progresses feature eighteen times, but the book reveals nothing new.¹³ Weir covers familiar ground and claims, like others before her, that a royal visit signalled a special honour and that there was

¹¹ Cf. Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), *passim*.

¹² There is, for example, no mention of progress entertainments in Jasper Ridley, *Elizabeth I* (London: Guild, 1987); Christopher Hibbert in *The Virgin Queen: A Portrait of Elizabeth I* (London: Guild, 1990) only mentions the possible honorific character of a royal visit and stresses the possibility of advancement (p. 139).

¹³ (London: Cape, 1998), p. 266.

considerable competition amongst aristocrats to entertain Elizabeth. The 'beautiful relation' between monarch and aristocrats is paramount:

In order for her subjects to share in the delights of her progresses, the Queen publicised them by having accounts printed after her return. Such pamphlets were hugely popular, and served –as they were intended to do– to enhance the legend of the Virgin Queen. (p. 268)

We are informed that, during the Cowdray entertainment of August 1591, Lady Montague was 'overcome by the honour of having the Queen stay', and at Elvetham a month later the Earl of Hertford 'excelled himself in an attempt to regain royal favour' (pp. 408-9).

In an essay dealing with 'private and occasional drama', terms which describe progress entertainments perfectly, Martin Butler remains fairly reticent about progresses.¹⁴ The traditional view that Elizabeth's travels were opportunities to provide points of contact between the monarch and her people is reiterated. A royal visit during a progress offered the hosts an opportunity for complimenting the Queen and regaining her favour, if necessary. It also served as a means to consolidate the predominant hierarchies: 'On these occasions Queen and people played out a myth of holiday solidarity that underpinned a political ideology of national unity' (p. 134).

Even books that deal with progresses and their entertainments exclusively do little to change or challenge traditional views. Ian Dunlop's *Palaces and Progresses of Elizabeth I* provides some useful architectural information as well as illustrations of

¹⁴ 'Private and Occasional drama', in *The Cambridge Guide to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 127-59.

royal palaces and individual houses. However, the book follows the traditional view that progress entertainments were primarily honorific. We are told that aristocrats were vying with each other for the honour of entertaining the Queen (p. 119), and that Elizabeth's sole motivation for embarking on progress was to show herself to her people in an attempt to win their hearts.¹⁵

June Osborne's book, entitled *Entertaining Elizabeth I*, provides some attractive pictorial material, but it too lacks a critical analysis of progress entertainments.¹⁶ Osborne cites the usual sanitary reasons and outbreaks of plague in London as the chief motivation for progresses. Again we are told that the potential hosts were eager to welcome the Queen, because there was always the hope of preferment or regaining the Queen's favour if it had been lost. The tenor of the fete at Cowdray is described as 'ingenious flattery', and the Earl of Hertford was 'anxious to buy his way back into [the Queen's] favour' so 'he felt he should make an exceptional effort and outdo his peers' at Elvetham, we are informed (p. 88). These interpretations are far too superficial and inaccurate.

Alone Jean Wilson's book *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* proves valuable to anybody studying elite entertainments.¹⁷ It provides an introduction to the subject, explores the cult of Elizabeth and its origins in classical and medieval literature, and analyses royal spectacles such as Accession Day Tilts, progress entertainments and masques. Her greatest service to Renaissance Studies is the editing of four

¹⁵ (London: Cape, 1962).

¹⁶ *Entertaining Elizabeth I: The Progresses and Great Houses of her Time* (London: Bishopsgate, 1989).

¹⁷ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980).

entertainments, which makes these texts accessible to a wider public. However, she too claims that a royal visit was honorific:

The presentation of Lord Montague, despite his Catholicism, as the centre of the ultra-loyal men of Sussex would contribute to this emphasis on his personal loyalty and assure the Queen of his position of strength in the area, while the Queen's obvious favour shown to Montague would reassure his neighbours about the strength of his position with regard to the Queen, which his Catholicism might have caused them to doubt. (p. 86)

In the case of the Earl of Hertford, Wilson hints that the Queen might well have harboured suspicions towards him, but sadly she does not develop the point further (p. 96, p. 162, n.37).

A detailed analysis of progress entertainments is required. A great deal of work remains to be done, particularly where the last ten or fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign are concerned. I have therefore chosen to analyse three late Elizabethan progress entertainments. The occasions singled out for this purpose are the entertainments at Cowdray (August 1591), Elvetham (September 1591), and the last Elizabethan country-house entertainment at Harefield (July 1602).

The host of the Cowdray entertainment was Viscount Montague, a powerful Catholic peer in a remote, strongly Catholic community (Sussex). By the 1590s, being Catholic had become illegal, and those adhering to the old faith were potentially suspect. Moreover, seminary priests were known to enter the country illegally through the ports on the south coast, and were being smuggled up to London via a Catholic network of safe houses, two of which belonged to Montague.

The Earl of Hertford, whose two sons by Lady Catherine Grey had a very good claim to the throne, provided the second entertainment. At the time the Queen was 58 years old, had no children or heirs, and refused to name a successor. It is conceivable that, in hosting the entertainment, Hertford was looking for the ultimate preferment, the throne for his sons. On the other hand, both Hertford and Montague had good grounds to harbour dissident feelings towards the Crown, which might have created considerable tension during the events.

The progress festivities at Harefield in July 1602 are significant in that they form the last great country-house entertainment of Elizabeth's reign. Her host on this occasion was Sir Thomas Egerton, who by this time had risen to the position of Lord Keeper. While the two other men had sufficient reason to be disaffected, Egerton had become one of the top-level officials of the Elizabethan government. We would expect his motivation in hosting an entertainment for the Queen, as well as the entertainment itself, therefore to be quite different from the two earlier fetes.

In each instance, the whole event rather than merely the text will be examined. In order to bring these entertainments into relief, and to reconstruct the social dramas that were being played out, we must approach these pageants individually and historically, as Curtis Breight has demanded. Only if we take the specific context of each of these progress entertainments into consideration will we come up with satisfactory interpretations. But, in our search for hidden meanings, we also have to be aware of the dangers, as Sidney Anglo has pointed them out:

We have, I believe, become both too sophisticated and too gullible. We treat the web-spinning subtleties of sixteenth-century scholars and the intricate flattery of courtiers alike with too much respect --indeed, nowadays it is scarcely permitted

to regard even the most arrant toadyism as *mere flattery*-- and it is inevitable that the quest for hidden connotations sometimes results in a species of erudite buffoonery.¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Image-making: The means and the limitations', in *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. John Guy (London/New York: Arnold, 1997), pp. 36-7.

I. The Elizabethan Progress

We come for the hearts and allegiance of our subjects.
(Queen Elizabeth I)

Royal progresses were initiated by Henry VII to bolster the still contested claim to the throne. They developed slowly and only came into their own in the sixteenth century under Queen Elizabeth I. The English court had traditionally been peripatetic, moving from one royal household to another. However, national unrest and a centralized government resulted in the early Tudors restricting themselves almost exclusively to royal palaces and hunting lodges around London. The Elizabethan progress was both a return to the earlier, wider journeys and innovative in that the Court descended upon the (country) houses of the nobility and local gentry. The right to occupy the house of a subject derived from feudal traditions -- ultimately, all manors were held by the Crown.

The habit of taking the Court on progress in the summer months was established for political, economical and hygienic reasons. The palaces needed to be cleaned, or 'sweetened', on a regular basis, because the lack of sanitary installations tended to cause problems after only a few weeks. Sir John Harington, Elizabeth's godson, paints a vivid picture of the situation:

Even in the goodliest and stateliest palaces of our realm, notwithstanding all our provisions of vaults, or sluices or gates, of pains of poor folks in sweeping and scouring, yet still this same whoreson saucy stink, though he were commanded on pain of death not to come within the gates, yet would spite of our noses.¹

¹ *A New Discourse of the Stale Subject called the Metamorphosis of Ajax*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 160.

Moreover, London was a very unhealthy place during the summer months: there was always the fear of plague and lesser epidemics. A progress did not actually save the Crown money; Lord Burghley estimated that Elizabeth's annual travels cost her up to £2000 a year.² However, by travelling the country the ruler was in a position to keep an eye on his mighty noblemen while simultaneously informing himself about the state of the country.

Elizabeth's progresses were made for a combination of traditional reasons and motives of her own:

[Elizabeth] liked to see what was going on in her country; and more important still, she also liked to *be* seen. A ruler who was a mere name to her subjects might find that, in case of a conflict, their loyalty went not to her but their own local lord whom they knew personally; and the risk of that happening might be all the greater when the ruler was not a king, as traditionally, but a queen, a mere woman.³

She kept up the tradition and made it more systematic. There may have also been the calculation that by making her wealthier subjects lodge, feed and entertain her and her large entourage, Elizabeth ensured to a certain extent that these subjects would not become wealthy enough to be able to finance a rebellion against her.

Two principal departments were running the royal household and were responsible for organizing the progresses, the Lord Chamberlain's and the Lord Steward's. The Lord Chamberlain's role was to look after the external side of the Queen's life. He headed a staff of ushers, gentlemen grooms and pages who were in charge of the Queen's Privy Chamber. He organized the Queen's accommodation and wardrobe,

² Allegra Woodworth, 'Purveyance for the Royal Household in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 35 (1945), part 1, 13; see also Zillah Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia, 1578* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), p. 5.

³ Lisa Hopkins, *Elizabeth I and Her Court* (London: Vision, 1990), p. 135.

together with her ladies and Maids of Honour, her entertainments and travels. He ensured that all ceremonies were conducted in an appropriate style and visitors were received in a manner suitable to their rank. First and foremost, his task was to make sure that the Queen's safety was never in jeopardy. The Lord Steward, on the other hand, supervised the services required to maintain the Court. These were provided by twenty different household departments, each with its own particular function, like the bakehouse, larder, spicery, kitchen, cellar and many more. The Lord Steward was responsible for all servants, whose number amounted to well over 1000. All of these had to go on progress with the Court in the summer.

Once the route of the progress had been decided upon --the itinerary was usually drawn up by the Chamberlain and Vice-Chamberlain in consultation with the Queen-- and the timetable worked out, the mayors of the towns through which Elizabeth intended to pass would be told of her coming, the owners of the country houses where she intended to stay were informed and notified of the duration of the visit and the number of people for whom bed and board would have to be provided. Officials would be sent out later to follow the course of the itinerary to ensure that the necessary arrangements had actually been made; that the roads were in a reasonable state, and that there were no reports of plague in the area.⁴

The progresses were restricted in scope and not always on the same scale of elaboration. The state of the roads and the speed at which the Court could travel

⁴ The maintenance of roads became the responsibility of each parish in 1555.

However, they were merely required to work on them four (later six) days a year, which, together with the fact that there was no attempt at drainage, resulted in constant complaints about their poor condition.

--between 10 and 12 miles a day-- precluded long trips. Except for the great Midlands progresses in 1565, 1572 and 1575, and the westward progress in 1564, Elizabeth stayed in the Home Counties. The progresses that took the Queen further afield lasted up to four months, whereas the ones through the Home Counties were usually limited to a month or two. Apparently, trips to Wales and the North --in 1564 Elizabeth meant to go to York-- were planned but did not take place. Elizabeth was never more than 150 miles from the capital.

Her officials did not share the Queen's enthusiasm for progresses, mainly because of the tremendous upheaval they caused. Along with the personnel of the household went up to 400 carts, carrying the baggage (everything from clothes and linen to tableware, furnishings and documents) and as many as 2400 pack animals, in an undertaking that could easily turn into the opposite of pleasure in bad weather and on roads there were hardly more than dirt tracks. Often it was impossible to find suitable accommodation for everybody in the Queen's entourage. To make matters worse, Elizabeth developed an increasing tendency to change her mind at the very last moment. Consequently, there were many complaints, and every possible excuse was exploited for postponing a progress, usually with very little success. Even in the last years of her life she kept up the custom, daring those who were not in favour or felt too old to stay at home.

Elizabeth made her first excursions to Oxford, Cambridge and the Inns of Court. In each instance a play was performed.⁵ The production of a play by the scholars of the two universities and the lawyers of the Inns of Court was an obvious way of

⁵ When the Queen visited Oxford in 1566 a stage collapsed during a performance of *Palamon and Arcite*, injuring three students fatally.

celebrating a royal visit. Everything required for staging a play, like playwrights, actors, a stage and an auditorium was easily available. It was somewhat more difficult to stage theatrical performances on progress, but since Elizabeth's penchant for plays was well known, they became an essential part of every progress entertainment. Frequently, London poets and playwrights such as John Lyly, John Davies or George Gascoigne were brought in specially for these occasions.

It was on progresses, which constituted Elizabeth's summer holidays, that the great entertainments of the reign took place. Their plots stretched over several days or even weeks (Kenilworth). In addition to learned orations and debates, fireworks, mock battles, dances, masques and plays, these entertainments combined rituals of greeting and parting and of the giving of gifts by the local hosts at boundaries of every shire, town, or estate. Not only did these shows grant the Queen a temporary break from the pressures of government business, a chance to see more remote parts of her realm, and of being seen by people outside London, but they too could be used as vehicles for propagating the so-called 'cult' of Elizabeth further.

This objective was particularly obvious in her visits to private houses. The courtiers she visited were usually intimately acquainted with the details of the cult and the way Elizabeth wished herself to be portrayed. By displaying their familiarity with the cult the respective hosts indicated how close they were to the Queen. Being visited by the Queen and Court was a golden opportunity to display in front of one's fellow courtiers, neighbours and retainers not only the size and magnificence of one's house, the ingenuity and fashionableness of one's garden, but also how imaginatively, wittily and lavishly one could entertain her.

The architectural history of Kenilworth Castle illustrates this point. The castle had belonged to the Earl of Leicester's father, Northumberland, but when he was attainted and executed in 1553 it reverted to the Crown. Ten years later Elizabeth gave it back to Leicester. He spent the next decade converting the castle from a medieval fortress into a magnificent Tudor palace in an attempt to portray himself as a suitable consort. The Norman keep was modernized with large windows. A forecourt and gatehouse with mullioned windows were added, and a pleasure garden with a marble fountain and aviary laid out. Elizabeth seems to have appreciated Leicester's efforts because she visited him three times at Kenilworth (in 1565, 1572, and during the famous progress of 1575).

The Queen's descent upon the house of a wealthy courtier, Privy Councillor or local magnate was both feared and coveted. It was coveted for the honour it meant and the potential of advancement it offered. It also gave the host a unique chance to promote his own agenda, which did not necessarily coincide with that of his monarch. On the other hand, a visit was feared lest for some reason the house should not be suitable to receive the royal guest, or there should be a hitch and the entertainment not come up to expectations. Moreover, a visit usually involved great expenses: the cost of food alone was enormous; additional musicians and players had to be hired; often temporary structures had to be erected. Sir Henry Lee, who had entertained the Queen both at Woodstock and Ditchley, wrote to Robert Cecil in 1600, when he heard a rumour that a progress was coming his way. He pleads that at present he cannot not afford to entertain Elizabeth:

... her Majesty threatens a progress and her coming to my houses of which I would be most proud as oft beforetime, if my fortune answered my desire, or part of her Highness's many promises performed. My estate without my undoing

cannot bear it. My continuance in her Court has been long, my charge great, my land sold and debts not small. How this will agree with the entertaining of such a prince your wisdom can best judge.⁶

Money had to be spent on house extensions, improvements and conversions, on extra silver and plate, new hangings, furnishings and on the gifts that were traditionally presented to the Queen as a token of devotion and gratitude. Apparently, Lord Burghley had originally envisaged Theobalds as a house of modest size, and it was only 'enlarged by occasion of her Majesty's often coming'. He did not really have any choice in this matter, because on Elizabeth's first of thirteen visits to Theobalds 'fault had been found with the small measure of [the Queen's] chamber'.⁷

The extravagant preparations made by her wealthier subjects Elizabeth welcomed and certainly encouraged. They set the standards that made a royal visit such an expensive honour. In staging *The Princely Pleasures* at Kenilworth in 1575, the Earl of Leicester spent the huge sum of £1000 a day during the Queen's three-week stay, and essentially bankrupted himself. A ten-day visit to Lord Burghley in 1591 came to over £1000, and the three-day sojourn at Lord Keeper Egerton's house at Harefield in 1602 amounted to as much as £2013.18s.4d., of which £1255.12s.0d. was apparently spent on provisions, £199.9s.11d. on temporary buildings, and the balance on gifts, shows and the like.⁸ There is no indication that Egerton received any recoupment from the Cofferer, although he theoretically would have been

⁶ Quoted in E.K. Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 180.

⁷ John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), II, p. 56n.

⁸ CSPD, II, 58; *Egerton Papers*, ed. John Payne Collier (London: Camden Society 12, 1840), pp. 342, 347.

entitled to it. Fortunately for him, his friends and neighbours contributed large gifts of food to help with the hospitality.

The Queen's visit naturally influenced the relationship of her hosts with their neighbours. A progress was an opportunity for the whole area to display their loyalty. There was also the hope that if benefits were gained for the actual host they would be distributed through the county by his power of patronage. The country welcomes were special shows that were designed to glorify the monarch as well as the town, university or family that received her, and as a result, no expense was spared.

From the regime's point of view, progresses were invaluable public relations exercises.⁹ They had to be carefully prepared and staged for maximum impact. Travelling the country, as opposed to staying in the capital, provided the opportunity to establish 'points of contact' between the people and their monarch. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the ordinary subject, and it gave the Queen the chance to see some more remote areas of her realm. John Strype wrote of the entertainments presented to Elizabeth early in the reign that 'by these means shewing herself so freely and condescendingly unto her people, she made herself dear and acceptable unto them', thus creating 'mutual love and affection'.¹⁰

The propaganda benefits of Elizabeth's visit to an area did not consist solely in the impact it had on the individual through the glamour of her personality and presence.

⁹ I have adopted the term 'regime' as employed by Wallace MacCaffrey in his book *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). MacCaffrey understands 'regime' as a group of politicians who formed a collective, quasi-organic, and for some time, stable governing body.

¹⁰ J. Nichols, *Progresses*, I, pp. 67, 70.

Local memory is long. Elizabeth's visits were calculated to assure the townspeople of their importance and increase their support of the local administration. The loyalty thus fostered might be vital if there were to be a major uprising or invasion. The towns often controlled strategic bridges and major routes and thus access to London. Her 1578 progress, for example, took Elizabeth to East Anglia. She had good reason to visit there: Norwich was the second city in the kingdom and Norfolk a populous and prosperous county. More important still, it had been the core of Mary Tudor's political support, and loyalty to the Howards was still very much in evidence. Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, had only been executed six years previously, and there were numerous recusants whose loyalty to the Crown had to be ascertained.

Similar considerations lay behind the Queen's visits to country houses. The days of the private army had been ended by Henry VII's Statute of Livery and Maintenance, but the power and influence of the old noble families and local magnates was still great. The Queen's visit to a private house was usually intended to reinforce the power of the local magnate and to enhance his prestige in the eyes of his neighbours and dependents. This ensured that should they be called upon to follow him in her service, they would do so more willingly. Simultaneously, a visit could serve as a method of "checking up" on people who could potentially cause problems for the Crown. It was a reminder that, although a particular nobleman might live in the country and away from the capital, he was not outside the range of the monarch's power:

Thus the progress was more than an instrument of public relations and a refreshing change of scene; it was an extraordinarily elaborate and extended

periodic ritual drama, in which the monarch physically and symbolically took possession of her domains.¹¹

Elizabeth knew that the loyalty of her subjects was the backbone of her government. If she were able to attract the allegiance of the ordinary people, they might serve as a protection against possible assassination attempts and rebellion internally, and against invasion from foreign powers externally. In the foreword to Zillah Dovey's book David Loades points out that 'With neither a standing army nor a professional police force, the coercive resources of the Crown were extremely limited.'¹² Suppressing rebellions or fighting external enemies cost a great deal of money. Obedience, based on genuine devotion, not only came cheaper but would also prove more effective. A loyal nation would be less likely to revolt in hard times and might more easily pay taxes and serve in royal armies and fleets. Therefore, Elizabeth did not only have to project a sophisticated and allusive image of the female monarch to her well-educated courtiers, she also had to present a simpler, more basic but nonetheless effective message to the common people.

Elizabeth never went north of Stafford or west of Bristol. As a matter of fact, she seems to have had little interest in travel as such, but she realized that progresses could be exploited for her own ends. On these occasions she behaved with a well-calculated mixture of regal condescension, good humour, and dignified approachability. There was an extraordinary informality about these processions, with Elizabeth stopping from time to time as people came to present petitions, little gifts or to speak to her. The Spanish Ambassador describes a scene in Berkshire in

¹¹ Louis A. Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes', and The Pastoral of Power", in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 50.

¹² *An Elizabethan Progress*, p. xi.

1568 which seems fairly typical of the way the Queen took advantage of these occasions:

She was received everywhere with great acclamations and signs of joy, as is customary in this country; whereat she was extremely pleased and told me so, giving me to understand how beloved she was by her subjects and how highly she esteemed this, together with the fact that they were peaceful and contented, whilst her neighbours on all sides are in such trouble. She attributed it all to God's miraculous goodness. She ordered her carriage sometimes to be taken where the crowd seemed thickest, and stood up and thanked the people.¹³

Elizabeth was adept at orchestrating public events successfully, and playing to the gallery came naturally to her. Surely this scene was orchestrated at least partly for the ambassador's benefit, as well as for everybody else present.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, all great powers kept resident ambassadors at each other's courts. These diplomats were usually posted abroad for significant periods of time and kept their own supporting staff. Lisa Jardine remarks on their brief: 'The ambassador's task was effectively that of a political intelligence officer-- his diplomatic instructions required him to report frequently and minutely everything of political importance.'¹⁴ Eustache Chapuys was sent to London as the resident ambassador for Spain in 1529, and he remained in England for almost sixteen years. During his stay he managed to build up an extensive intelligence network. After Henry VIII had divorced Catherine of Aragon in 1533, Chapuys hired five or six full-time agents, who in turn paid innkeepers and servants for information, and one of Anne Boleyn's maids reported regularly to one of these agents for over a year.¹⁵ Everything from gossip to important political decisions taken at Court, was reported back to Spain.

¹³ CSP Span., Elizabeth, II, 50-1.

¹⁴ *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 256.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

We have only scattered evidence which ambassadors accompanied the Court on progress. Thus we know that the Spanish ambassador went with Elizabeth in 1568 and that Spain had no official representative in England between December 1571 (when de Spes was expelled in the aftermath of the Ridolfi Plot) and March 1578 (when Don Bernadino de Mendoza arrived in London). Burghley noted in his diary in August 1572 that he had spoken to de la Mothe Fenelon, the French ambassador, who was accompanying the progress.¹⁶ If the ambassadors' brief was indeed to report 'minutely everything of possible political importance', they could not afford to stay behind when Elizabeth left London for as long as three or four months. They had no choice but to follow the Court wherever it went, at least for some of the time. Although Fenelon was with the Court at Kenilworth in August 1572, he seems to have left some time later, only to return in September, when the progress had reached the royal palace at Woodstock.¹⁷

The fact that the ambassadors of other European powers accompanied (at least part of) the progresses must surely have affected the event and the audience. The ambassadors as direct channels of information to a foreign court could be used as instruments in foreign politics. Elizabeth merely had to make sure that the foreign envoys reported what she wanted them to report. Therefore, a public ovation such as the one in Berkshire, was orchestrated so that the Queen's obvious popularity would be reported back to Philip II.

¹⁶ Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Knopf, 1960), p. 86.

¹⁷ The ambassador had the thankless task to come up with an official explanation for the St. Bartholomew's Massacre. For a description of the scene between Elizabeth and Fenelon see Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 275, n.3.

There are also numerous examples of ambassadors following Elizabeth on other (shorter) official engagements where she used them as part of her political schemes. In 1581 she attended a banquet given by Francis Drake at Greenwich. Drake had just returned from the New World with a haul worth at least £332,000, most of it taken from the Spanish treasure fleet.¹⁸ After the meal Elizabeth remarked jokingly that the King of Spain had demanded Drake's head. And with this, she handed a golden sword of state to the French ambassador and ordered him to knight Drake, thus neatly drawing him (and the French) into an act that was a deliberate snub to the Spanish.¹⁹

Although Elizabeth attributed her popularity 'to God's miraculous goodness', the enthusiasm was in fact the product of her own hard work and that of her "spin doctors". The Queen had a strong, almost mystical, sense of personal identity with her people, but at the same time she was a realistic politician, who took few chances. She knew very well that the popular support she was looking for could not be taken for granted, but that she, together with her image-makers, had to work to create and preserve it.

1.1 The 1591 Progress

The following two sub-chapters will focus on the progresses of 1591 and 1602, the years when the entertainments to be examined in this thesis took place. The fetes at

¹⁸ Mendoza's figure of £450,000 is probably exaggerated. The figure of £332,000, quoted by Spanish merchants, appears more realistic.

¹⁹ CSP Span., Elizabeth, III, 93.

Cowdray and Elvetham were staged in August and September 1591 respectively, and the Harefield fete took place at the end of July 1602. In order to place these entertainments in a chronological context it seems sensible to give a brief overview of the places and people the Queen visited.²⁰

Elizabeth went on progress every summer between 1559 and 1579, except in 1562 before the French War and in 1570 after the Revolt of the Northern Earls. In the 1580s the overall political situation was too unstable to be far away from London. Therefore, after accompanying the Duke of Anjou to Canterbury when he left for the Netherlands in February 1582, Elizabeth did not go further than Windsor and Theobalds, Lord Burghley's house in Hertfordshire, for the next nine years. By the time she resumed her progresses in 1591, many courtiers hoped that now, in her fifty-eighth year, she would find them too strenuous. But the Queen, who enjoyed her progresses and recognized their importance, was not prepared to abandon them. She even travelled the country during the last three years of her life.

During the later years, however, Elizabeth did not travel as far afield as she had done previously. This was probably due more to fear of assassination than to her advancing years. When the Queen started travelling again in 1591 she was planning to travel on a wider scale (see below). On 11 February Elizabeth removed from Richmond to Lambeth Palace to visit Archbishop Whitgift briefly. Two days later she moved from Lambeth to Greenwich Palace. On 10 May Elizabeth visited Burghley at Theobalds, where she stayed until the 20th. On this occasion she knighted Burghley's younger son, Robert Cecil. On 10 July the Queen visited

²⁰ See the map of the 1591 progress in Appendix II.

Burghley again, this time at his London house, situated on the northern side of the Strand. On the same day Lord Hunsdon, in his role as Lord Chamberlain, 'in haste' informed Sir William More in a letter that 'her Majesty is resolved to make a Progress this year as far as Portsmouth, and to begin the same on the 22 or 23 of this month.' Sir William was told that Elizabeth definitely planned to visit him at his house at Loseley and that she intended to go to Petworth and Cowdray as well. He was asked to make arrangements for her to stay at a house between his own house and Cowdray for one night.²¹ In his answer to Lord Hunsdon's letter, Sir William makes several suggestions but points out that there was really no convenient and adequate house where the Queen could stay.²² In the event, Elizabeth probably went to Loseley, where she had visited before, but we have no account of this visit.

After having dined at Farnham Castle, the palace of the Bishop of Winchester, on 14 August, Elizabeth made her way to Cowdray. When on progress it was her usual practice to arrive before supper, in the late afternoon or early evening, and to leave after breakfast in the late morning. She arrived at Cowdray on Saturday, 14th August, and stayed until the 20th. We know that Burghley was with her because he writes 'from the Court at Cowdray, August 18, 1591'.²³ Although the progresses essentially constituted the Queen's summer holidays, the affairs of state could obviously not be put "on hold" for weeks, or even months. That meant that, together with the foreign ambassadors, important members of the Privy Council like Burghley accompanied the Queen wherever she went.²⁴

²¹ J. Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 80.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²⁴ In 1572 Burghley was suffering badly from gout and had to accompany the progress in a litter. Although he was unwell, staying at home seems not to have

On 20 August the Queen left Cowdray for Chichester, where she spent some days. According to John Nichols, there was a full account of the entertainment at Chichester in one of the Corporation Books which, however, was subsequently lost. The following entry in a manuscript index of the lost register remains: '1591. The manner of the Queen's reception and entertainment in the Progresse to Chichester; and rewards given by the City to the Queen's Officers.'²⁵ It is certain that she stayed at Petworth and Stanstead thereafter. Some time later she probably returned to these two houses, and then moved on to Portsmouth. From Portsmouth the Court moved to Tichfield Abbey, the seat of the Earl of Southampton. On 2nd September Burghley sent another letter from there.²⁶ From Tichfield Abbey they went to Southampton. On 13th September Burghley wrote to the English Ambassador 'from the Court at Sir Henry Wallop's, at Farley, near Basing', where they were entertained sumptuously for several days. On 20th September Burghley writes from Odiham, and from Elvetham on the same day.²⁷ On 24 September the Court was back at Farnham Castle. Two days later Sutton Place near Guildford was visited.

After these travels the Court returned to Richmond, from where dispatches from Burghley are dated 12 October.²⁸ In early November the Court spent time at Southwyk with the French Ambassador Beauvoir la Nocie and Monsieur de Reaux, an envoy from the French King. On 11 November Elizabeth visited Ely Place, the Bishop of Ely's house, parts of which Sir Christopher Hatton had been renting from 1589. As it turned out, Elizabeth visited Hatton in his last illness. He died on 20th

been an option.

²⁵ J. Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 97.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²⁷ The royal palace at Odiham was only three miles from Elvetham.

²⁸ J. Nichols, III, p. 98.

November. For Christmas Elizabeth probably returned to Richmond, her favourite palace in the winter months.

1.2 The 1602 Progress

Elizabeth's 1602 progress, the last she was to undertake, was restricted in scope as well as time. The Queen may well have been determined to travel for some time and some distance, as in 1591, but the rainy weather that summer would not allow it. The text of the Harefield entertainment mentions repeatedly that the weather was unseasonably wet.²⁹

The progresses of the last three years of the reign have a slightly manic quality, as if Elizabeth was trying to prove to herself, but even more to others, that she "could still do it". In an effort not to be seen to be old, infirm or flagging, the Queen approached life with greater determination than ever. Increased will power, effort and display characterize the public appearances of her last years because she knew that if she showed any signs of weakness, rumours that she was dying and discussions about her successor would be fuelled. Thus, when in February 1600 a cousin of the Queen of France arrived on an official visit, Elizabeth took great trouble to entertain him, 'and to shew that she [was] not so old as some would have her, danced both measures and galliards in his presence.'³⁰ In August 1602 Elizabeth felt briefly unwell while on progress, 'but would not be known of it, for

²⁹ See the transcript of the Harefield entertainment.

³⁰ Quoted in A. Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 553-4.

the next day she walked abroad in the park, lest any should take notice of it'.³¹ That her determination and obvious physical well-being managed to impress at least some people is reflected in such utterances as the Duke of Stettin's, who observed Elizabeth take a stroll in the gardens at Oatlands in the autumn of 1602, 'walking as freely as if she had been only eighteen years old.'³²

Earlier in 1602 Elizabeth had visited the Lord Chamberlain (George Carey, 2nd Lord Hunsdon) at Lambeth (29 April) and Sir Richard Buckley at Lewisham, some three or four miles from Greenwich (8 May). At the beginning of July the Queen was planning to stay with John Fortescue, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at his Buckinghamshire house, then the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham, whom she had visited before in 1591, and even to travel as far as Bath and Bristol.³³ In the event, the Queen's progress did not go far at all. It seems she only visited Sir William Russell at Chiswick, Ambrose Copinger, then Lord Keeper Egerton at Harefield, and finally Sir William Clarke at Burnham. In a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury dated 23 August, Sir Thomas Edmonds explains the reasons for cutting the progress short: 'Her Majesty hath had compassion, notwithstanding her earnest affection to go her Progress, yet to forbear the same in favour of her people, in regard of the unseasonableness of the weather; and for that purpose doth appoint to return by the end of this week, and settle at Oatlands.' He then adds that the Queen 'hath been very honourably entertained at my Lord Keeper's house, and many times richly presented.'³⁴

³¹ CSPD VI, 232.

³² *Diary of Philip Julius Duke of Stettin Pomerania through England in 1602*, ed. Gottfried von Bülow and Walter Powell, *TRHS*, 2nd ser., 6 (1892), 51.

³³ J. Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 578.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

After visiting Sir William Clarke at Burnham the Queen and Court moved on to Oatlands and Richmond at the beginning of October, from where she returned to Whitehall in time for her Accession Day Tilts in November. The Court then stayed at Whitehall for Christmas and the festivities that year were very jolly. There was much dancing and bear-baiting, and many plays were performed. The Queen was also entertained at the London houses of the Earl of Nottingham and Sir Robert Cecil, two of her closest Privy Councillors.

On 21 January 1603 the Court moved to Richmond where in early February the Venetian ambassador was granted an audience. Elizabeth wore a magnificent taffeta dress of silver and white, trimmed with gold, and displayed a 'vast quantity of gems and pearls'. More than by her appearance the ambassador was impressed with her 'lively wit'; she appeared to him 'in excellent health ... and in perfect possession of all her senses'. He even professed to see remnants of a 'never quite lost beauty' in her face.³⁵ However, at the end of the month the Queen fell into a deep depression, probably caused by the death of the Countess of Nottingham, who had been her companion since the beginning of the reign. She did not recover and died at Richmond Palace early on 24 March 1603.

³⁵ CSP Venice, IX, 529, 565.

II. The Historical-Political Context

*And, though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my Crown, that I
have reigned with your loves.*

(Queen Elizabeth I, "Golden Speech", 1601)

*They could not lightly be in worse state than they were, considering that the people
generally were much impoverished by continual subsidies and taxes ... that little or no
equality was used in those impositions, the meaner sort commonly sustaining the
greater burden, and the wealthier no more than themselves listed to bear ... that many
privileges had passed under name for the benefit of some particular men, to the
detriment of the Commonwealth.*

(John Clapham)

II.1 The Two Reigns of Queen Elizabeth

If we want to understand progress entertainments more fully, we must get away from the superficial reading that a visit from the Queen was purely honorific. Neither were her hosts necessarily pleased at the honour or viewed the visit as a career opportunity. We have to inform ourselves as fully as possible about the context of an entertainment. What were the conditions, political, ideological and economic, surrounding the event? Who was the host and what was his relationship with the Queen? Did the locality of an entertainment play a part? Why did the Queen decide to visit a certain family there and then? Does the entertainment text reflect the circumstances of the event?

In his discussion of Renaissance drama Martin Butler speaks of the 'insistent dialogue between text and occasion'.¹ It seems that this dialogue is ignored in much of the research into progress entertainments, and this thesis is attempting to remedy this state of affairs, necessarily on a restricted scale. A great deal of work remains to be done

¹ 'Private and occasional drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 127.

where progress entertainments, as events rather than as texts, are concerned. The post-Armada period has been somewhat neglected, as Christopher Haigh pointed out in 1988.² Since I have chosen to examine three late Elizabethan progress entertainments and their contexts, it seems only sensible to give an overview of the period first.

In discussing the background to the three entertainments I have adopted the definition of the term 'last decade' (of Elizabeth's reign) as John Guy employs it, that is as comprising the years from 1585 until the end of the reign in 1603.³ Guy argues that there were 'two reigns' of Elizabeth, each with its own distinctive features. Patrick Crutwell made a similar suggestion in 1970 when he wrote:

To think of the Elizabethan age as a solid, unchanging unity is utterly misleading. Within it there were two generations and (roughly corresponding to those generations) two mentalities. In the 1590's the one 'handed over' to the other.⁴

Elizabeth's 'first reign' lasted, according to Guy, from her accession in 1558 until 1585. That year saw the reversal of England's non-interventionist foreign policy when an expeditionary force to the Netherlands was dispatched. The death of Alencon on 10 June 1584 and the assassination of William of Orange only a month later had left the Provinces leaderless and disunited. In the autumn of 1584, the important town of Ghent had fallen to the Spanish, and a similar fate could befall the commercial centre of Antwerp. For some months Elizabeth refused to act, hoping that Henry III would take over his dead brother's responsibilities in the Netherlands. If Henry were installed as sovereign of the Provinces, it would be his job to deal with the Spanish, and England

² *Elizabeth I* (London/New York: Longman, 1988), p. 181.

³ *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1ff. See also Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1977).

⁴ *The Shakespearean Moment and its Place in the Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 1.

would not have to get involved. At the end of February 1585, however, Henry finally rejected the Dutch offer to make him their king, and in June of that year, commissioners from the Low Countries arrived in England. Elizabeth, too, was offered sovereignty but politely refused. She was prepared to offer underhand aid in the form of money and munitions, but wanted to avoid outright war with Spain. Eventually, her Privy Council managed to persuade her to support the Dutch more wholeheartedly.⁵ She agreed to send an army and, on 10 August 1585, the Treaty of Nonsuch was signed.

Elizabeth was not at all happy at becoming embroiled in the problems on the Continent. Just how reluctant she was is reflected in a twenty-page pamphlet, *A Declaration of the Causes moving the Queen of England to give aid to the Defence of the People afflicted and oppressed in the Low Countries*. It was issued on 1 October 1585, and explained that the King of Spain was to blame for the escalation. He had been warned,

often and often again ... that if he did not otherwise by his wisdom and princely clemency restrain the tyranny of his governors and cruelty of his men of war, we feared that the people of his countries would seek foreign protection. ... Hereupon we hope no reasonable person can blame us if we have disposed ourselves to change this our former course and more carefully to look to the safety of our self and our people.⁶

Elizabeth saw her role in the Netherlands as a mediator, not as one of the warring parties, as becomes clear from the *Declaration*. She did not want to be drawn into the Dutch war, knowing full well that an English involvement there would put a severe strain on national finances.⁷ Under the terms agreed at Nonsuch the Queen provided

⁵ CSP, Foreign, XIX, 618.

⁶ Quoted in Maria Perry, *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), p. 195; see also note p. 257.

⁷ The Parliament of 1585 gave a generous grant of taxation, but only two years later the Queen had to apply to Parliament again for another subsidy; cf. F.C. Dietz, *English Public Finance, 1558-1641* (London/New York: American Historical Association, 1932), p. 55.

5000 foot soldiers and 1000 cavalry at her own expense. The first detachment of troops left on 16 August 1585, under the command of Colonel John Norris, but came too late to save Antwerp which had surrendered to the Duke of Parma the day before. In early December the Earl of Leicester was sent to the Netherlands as the Queen's Lieutenant General.

Elizabeth's 'second reign' started inauspiciously with the intervention in the Low Countries, only to proceed with the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots and the subsequent open war with Spain and the Catholic League, which brought high costs and casualties. The defeat of the Spanish Armada was a high point in an otherwise pretty dismal period, which was going to get worse in 'the nasty nineties', as Patrick Collinson has chosen to call them.⁸

The 1590s have repeatedly, and deservedly, been called 'crisis years'. A food shortage, due to a series of bad harvests or harvest failures and galloping inflation, were exacerbated by heavy military commitments due to the war against Spain, expeditions into France, and the rebellion in Ireland. Poverty, vagrancy, starvation and public disorder were the consequences. In the aftermath of the Armada, England had to be constantly worried about the Spanish threat throughout the 1590s. It was not foreseeable at the time that the 1588 Armada would be the only one to pose any real threat. Every summer an invasion was expected and forces were mobilized more than once in response to false reports. There were invasion scares in 1590, 1591, 1592, and 1594, all without foundation.⁹ Conversely, in 1595 four Spanish ships landed without warning

⁸ 'Ecclesiastical Vitriol: Religious Satire in the 1590s and the Invention of Puritanism', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. J. Guy, p. 170.

⁹ CSPD, III, 38.

near Penzance, burned it, and ravaged the village of Mousehole. This attack took the English completely by surprise.¹⁰ The constant stream of uncertain information about flotillas gathering at Lisbon or on the Biscay coast kept London in a state of permanent nervous alert.

Governmental anxiety was further intensified by the events in France that dramatically changed the international situation. Henry III had been assassinated in 1589 and his Bourbon cousin, Henry of Navarre, had succeeded him. The fact that he was a Protestant nullified his claim to the throne in Catholic eyes. Already in 1584 the French Catholics, organized in the Holy League, had made a treaty with Philip of Spain to support the Cardinal of Bourbon in his claim to the throne. Therefore, within a few days of his accession, Henry appealed to Elizabeth as a fellow Protestant and monarch for aid in men and money.¹¹ From an English point of view, an alliance with Henry IV offered long-term advantages but short-term liabilities. By entering into this particular struggle the English resources, already stretched to meet the demands of the Dutch and the need to counter possible Spanish designs on England and Ireland, had to be strained even further to assist the French King. If Henry could master his kingdom, however, the counterweight of a France hostile to Spain would re-establish the balance of power sufficiently to thwart Philip II's ambitions. Thus, in September 1589 Elizabeth agreed to lend Henry £20,000 and to send 4000 troops for one month. When the month had elapsed she extended their stay for another two months, although she was more than sceptical whether Henry would be able to pay them, as he had assured her.¹²

¹⁰ On the Spanish attack see Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 488; also Maria Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, p. 222.

¹¹ List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign, I, 290.

¹² List and Analysis, I, 326.

Internally, the succession problem was becoming ever more pressing. In 1590 Elizabeth had reached the age of 57 and could have died any day without having named her successor. The Queen may have had her eyes firmly fixed on the present, but her councillors were becoming nervous. By the late 1580s Leicester, Walsingham and Burghley had all entered into secret communication with James VI. Elizabeth, however, resolutely refused to countenance a “rising sun” during her lifetime. The succession was a taboo subject, but one which was the concern of all politically conscious Englishmen. As time went by, it became clear that the King of Scotland had the *de facto* claim because ‘he was male, protestant and available’.¹³ However, a peaceful accession was by no means a foregone conclusion. It could be engineered because Robert Cecil had prepared it, a consensus emerged in the Privy Council and among the leading nobles, and James himself worked towards building that consensus.

To her contemporaries it was never obvious that Elizabeth’s reign would last quite so long. From the comparatively distant perspective of Charles I’s time, Bishop Goodman stated that, towards the end of the reign, ‘The people were very generally weary of an old woman’s government.’¹⁴ A certain late-Elizabethan disenchantment with Elizabeth’s person and government can be detected. Much of the general discontent was economic in origin. The war with Spain and the military operations in Ireland swallowed resources more quickly than they could be provided. In 1599/1600 the Queen sold Crown lands worth £212,614, but this was not even enough to pay the army the Earl of Essex had taken to Ireland for six months.¹⁵ The poor in particular suffered under the

¹³ J. Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth*, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

¹⁴ Joel Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England* (London: Cape, 1973), p. 105.

¹⁵ CSPD, V, 476.

burdens of taxation, but the Queen had to economize as well. This resulted in a general tightening up in the distribution of patronage, which was 'greeted with shrill cries by those on the upper reaches of society who saw it as the primary duty of the Crown to provide them with a comfortable livelihood'.¹⁶ The Earl of Northumberland voiced the discontent among Elizabeth's aristocracy:

The nobility are unsatisfied that places of honour are not given them ... that Her Majesty is parsimonious and slow to relieve their wants which from their own prodigalities they have burdened themselves withal.¹⁷

Andre Hurault, Monsieur de Maisse, the Ambassador Extraordinary to Henry IV, also noted in 1597 that, although the English people still professed their love for their ageing Queen, her nobility thought differently: 'If by chance she should die, it is certain that the English would never again submit to the rule of a woman'.¹⁸

Christopher Haigh claims that during the last years of the reign the 'political misogyny of the early years' resurfaced strongly throughout the Court and beyond.¹⁹ In 1600 the Virgin Queen was 68 years old. Contemporary accounts of her appearance detail the degree to which she was showing her age.²⁰ At the same time, the "Rainbow Portrait" was issued, circulating the image of a youthful, unageing Gloriana. Efforts to imbue the ageing natural body of the monarch with the ageless aura of the body politic, which 'was supposed to be contained within the natural body of the Queen', formed an

¹⁶ A. Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, p. 548.

¹⁷ *Correspondence of King James VI of Scotland with Sir Robert Cecil and others during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society 78, 1861), p. 59.

¹⁸ *A Journal of all that was accomplished by Monsieur de Maisse Ambassador in England from King Henri IV to Queen Elizabeth Anno Domini 1597*, trans. and edited by G.B. Harrison and R.A. Jones (London: Nonesuch, 1931), p. 12.

¹⁹ *Elizabeth I*, p. 166; see also Steven Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny: "Hamlet", "The Revenger's Tragedy", and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607', *ShQ.*, 45 (1994), 141.

²⁰ *A Journal ... by Monsieur de Maisse*, pp. 25-6.

important part of the so-called cult of Elizabeth.²¹ Traditionally, it has been interpreted as a propaganda triumph for Tudor absolutism, flourishing, paradoxically, in the final decade of the reign when the Queen's difficulties and ageing had to be concealed under what Roy Strong has called 'the mask of youth'.²² Her fair complexion and the blush of youth were sustained by make-up and make-believe only, but still the tributes to her beauty continued. The cult persisted in its flattering effusions despite obvious evidence of physical decline because of what Frances Yates perceived as a deep 'need for order' pervading sixteenth-century Europe. In responding to this need, Elizabeth was able to use court pageantry and verse 'to focus fervent religious loyalty on the national monarch'.²³ The more recent New Historicist account stands this idealizing view of the monarchy on its head. Michael Foucault's conception of power has proved very influential and the 'result is a kind of *film noir* version of the Elizabethan world picture, starring the queen as supreme dominatrix in a courtly theatre of cruelty.'²⁴

Elizabeth's 'second reign' was also marked by the deaths of important councillors, which had both political and personal consequences. Leicester had died suddenly three weeks after the defeat of the Armada; Sir Thomas Mildmay had died in 1589; Secretary Walsingham and the Earl of Warwick both died in 1590 and Lord Chancellor Hatton in November 1591. Leicester, Burghley, Hatton and Walsingham had formed an inner circle of men whom the Queen trusted fully. This central coalition of ministers, who had done the principal business of state for the past two decades, dissolved in the space

²¹ Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 12.

²² Nicholas Hilliard (London: Joseph, 1975), pp. 9-13, 126-32.

²³ *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 108.

²⁴ Richard C. McCoy, 'Lord of Liberty: Francis Davison and the Cult of Elizabeth', in *The Reign of Elizabeth*, ed. J. Guy, p. 213.

of two and a half years. Leicester's death left a triple vacuum. The most influential voice in support of Protestantism (apart from Walsingham's) was silenced. Secondly, Robert Dudley died without a legitimate heir, and thus his clients were forced to look for a new patron. Many of them chose Leicester's stepson, the Earl of Essex, who emerged as the Queen's new favourite and was to dominate affairs until his abortive attempt at rebellion in 1601. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Elizabeth suffered a great personal loss through Leicester's death since he had been her closest friend and companion for thirty years. For some time, the Queen refused to fill the vacancies in the Privy Council or to reinforce her nobility. In 1598, after Burghley's death, the Privy Council was reduced to ten members, fewer than half the number of 1558. Eventually, Elizabeth was forced to recruit new councillors and the Earls of Shrewsbury and Worcester were promoted to the Privy Council after the Essex Rebellion.

Throughout the late-Elizabethan period the notion of a threat from below, as manifested in occasional local riots, a few cases of seditious words, and some law and order problems, was part of the more general mood of pessimism which pervaded the era. The fact that in the aftermath of the 1596 Oxfordshire Rising, for example, two men were tortured to disclose a conspiracy that never existed reflects the regime's paranoia.²⁵ The background to the rising was a harvest failure that year and disquiet over enclosures. When the initial petition to the Lord Lieutenant met with little official response a handful of poor people decided to rebel. They came together on Enslow Hill on 17 November 1596, expecting to initiate a popular uprising, but nobody would join them. The four men at the centre of the plot were arrested only hours later, and two of them

²⁵ John Walter, "'A Rising of the People?' The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596', *P & P*, 107 (1985), 90-143.

were hanged, drawn and quartered eight months later in exactly the place where they had hoped to start their uprising.²⁶

Religious opposition from the 'right' (Catholic) as well as from the 'left' (Puritan) complicated life further. The visit to Cowdray in August 1591 was immediately preceded by an uprising in London in support of some imprisoned Presbyterian ministers, resulting again in an unusual execution, which clearly reflects the anxiety of the government. On 28 July 1591 William Hacket was hanged, drawn and quartered in Cheapside following a proclamation by his two accomplices Edmund Copinger and Henry Arthington of the second coming of Christ. Keith Thomas has pointed out that 'usually the government dismissed such prophets as "brainsick" or "frantic"', therefore they would not be executed. However, in this case, retribution was swift and harsh.²⁷

The discovery of this 'conspiracy' facilitated contemporary attacks on radical Protestantism by the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The event was well timed and provided a great deal of material for strong propaganda against Presbyterianism. Significantly, there was a current Star Chamber case against a group of nine Puritan ministers, including the famous theologian Thomas Cartwright.²⁸ As early as 1570 Cartwright had maintained in a series of lectures at Cambridge, where he was a professor of divinity, that there was no foundation in scripture for the government of the Church by bishops. In effect he was advocating the abolition of the episcopacy. His

²⁶ On the very similar case of William Hacket see Appendix I; also Curtis C. Breight, 'Duelling Ceremonies: The Strange Case of William Hacket, Elizabethan Messiah', *JMRS*, 19 (1989), 35-67.

²⁷ *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp. 133-5.

²⁸ For further details of this case see Appendix I.

lectures caused a sensation and at the end of the year Cartwright was deprived of his post and fled to Germany, from whence he finally returned in 1585.

Traditional historiography, inspired by the nationalism of the nineteenth century, has portrayed the Elizabethan period as a self-confident and expansionary one. Another interpretation sees England as the 'Beleaguered Isle'; a small, worried nation on the fringe of Europe, nervously calculating its chances of survival in the face of internal and external enemies.²⁹ It is certainly true to say that the conditions in the last fifteen years or so of Elizabeth's long reign were bad enough to create a continual undercurrent of adverse comment among the lower orders. Surviving documentation from the Home Circuit of the assizes which covered Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex reveal a steady trickle of indictments under the 1581 Statute against Seditious Words. Some of the Queen's subjects criticized either their monarch or the social hierarchy in which they lived.³⁰

II.2 The Year 1591

Viewed against this backdrop, the Queen's visit to Viscount Montague, a powerful Catholic peer in a remote, through-and-through Catholic area of Sussex three years after Catholic Spain had sent an invasion force in the shape of the Armada, takes on increased significance. Another visit, only a month later, to the Earl of Hertford whose

²⁹ Carol Z. Wiener, 'The Beleaguered Isle: A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism', *P & P*, 51 (1971), 27-62.

³⁰ PRO, Clerks of Assize Records, Home Circuit Indictment, ASSI 35/34/2/43; 35/40/4/47; 35/36/2/39; 35/10/5/12.

son had a very good claim to the throne at a time when the succession was still unsettled, also invites further investigation.

I would like to suggest that royal visits were certainly not just visits. Elizabeth must have had good reason to take up her progresses again in 1591, after she had spent the summers of the previous decade in London. The early 1590s as a period were certainly not safer or more politically stable than the 1580s. The Queen's hosts must surely have been aware that her decision to visit them was probably informed by motives beyond the mere desire to make a "social call". But they too could make a virtue of necessity, and use the entertainments they were expected to organize as a medium to convey covert messages to the Queen and to implement their own agenda.

In many ways, the year 1591 is no more critical than any other year of the decade. It is unique for one important fact, however. August 1591 was the precise moment of the 'furthest extension of Elizabethan military operations'. Sir John Norris was stationed in Brittany, the Earl of Essex in Normandy, and Sir Francis Vere in the Netherlands. Moreover, there were English troops in Ireland and warships at sea. This was distinctly 'a war period for England'.³¹

There is evidence that England's possession of the Low Countries' sea ports was the only factor that prevented another Spanish invasion. Henry of Navarre (still a Protestant and uncrowned at the time) had warned Elizabeth towards the end of 1590 that the Spanish would certainly invade if only they could get a foothold in Brittany or Normandy. Therefore, the English operations in the provinces were not simply a

³¹ Edward P. Cheyney, *A History of England From the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth* (New York: Longman, 1914), pp. 259, 210, 211 n., 238, 239.

response to Henry's self-interested pleas but a defensive reaction to the Duke of Parma's, by now annual, incursions into France. Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma and nephew of Philip II, had succeeded Don John of Austria as commander of the Spanish troops in the Low Countries in October 1578. He had swiftly proved to be a successful general and achieved some important military victories.³² From the summer of 1590 onwards, Parma had also been involved in the war in France. There had been a Spanish invasion in August and again in October 1590.

From the Elizabethan regime's perspective, a southern progress had some very important objectives. The counties vulnerable to a Spanish invasion could be assessed for manifestations of discontent. The splendour of the royal image was made available to loyal and potentially disloyal subjects alike. A personal appearance by the Queen might confirm the former in their allegiance while it simultaneously served as an reminder to the latter that the monarchy was a powerful institution. John Bossy notes that 'the area comprising Sussex and east Hampshire was the least accessible in the whole of lowland England.'³³ A progress to a remote area such as this would remind its inhabitants that, although distant from the capital, they were not beyond the reach of the royal arm. A southern progress also had the added advantage that communications to and from the Continent were quicker and easier, due to the proximity to the Southern ports.

Finally, an influential yet suspected aristocrat could be scrutinized for signs of disloyalty. As a staunch and outspoken Catholic, Viscount Montague, the host of the

³² Some information on Parma can be found in Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 307-8 (in the Low Countries), pp. 444-65, 482-86 (in France).

³³ *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), p. 103.

Cowdray entertainment, was a potential abettor of a native rebellion in support of a Spanish landing. In 1615, ten years after the official end of the Anglo-Spanish war, the Privy Council was still aware of Sussex's accessibility to potential invaders when it reminded the Lords Lieutenant that it was a county that 'ought above all others to be sound and inhabited with people best affected'.³⁴

The Earl of Hertford, the host of the second progress entertainment to be discussed, was also potentially suspect, even if for different reasons. His elder son had a strong claim to the throne: he was a Protestant, of native birth and, most importantly, had an hereditary right to the succession –according to a clause in Henry VIII's will-- through his mother Catherine Grey.³⁵ The Hertford family had traditionally been influential and ambitious, and screening them for signs of disaffection or subversive dealings during a southern progress seemed a sensible idea.

A progress was always calculated, among other things, to establish a 'beautiful relation' among all classes, something especially desirable in a more remote area. It might also prove very valuable in the face of (potential) resentment. Lord Willoughby's French expedition levied 1000 troops from each of four areas in 1589/90, including Sussex and Hampshire, through much of which Elizabeth later travelled in 1591. The state papers and correspondence of the Privy Council convey a powerful impression of the growing reluctance in the shires to contribute to the war effort. In 1591 the Council complained to the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex that 'by example of some few at the first and toleration of their undutiful obstinacy' many inhabitants of the shire were refusing contributions for 'martial services'. Similar reprimands were delivered to the

³⁴ BM, Lansdowne MS 82, fol.103; cf. also APC, 1618-19, 199; PRO, SP 14/107/50.

³⁵ A detailed discussion of the Hertford claim to the throne can be found in chp. VI.

authorities of Middlesex, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire and Yorkshire during the early years of the decade. In 1593 the Privy Council declared that 'few of the men returned againe', and those few survivors were underpaid. Naturally, the commoners resented such injustice and exploitation. By 1592 'men had come to dread service in France and popular sentiment had turned against it ... soldiers went to all length of excuse and desertion rather than serve.'³⁶

In this context, a royal visit aimed to please the people, both great and small, and was also calculated to mollify local discontent over Willoughby's expedition. This reading is substantiated by another interesting fact. The 1589 expedition drew most of its men from the southern counties (Sussex, Hampshire and Kent). These counties were closest to Normandy, and this would facilitate transport of troops. The 1591 expedition to Normandy under Essex drew no troops at all from the area the Queen was soon to visit. A few months later, recruiting in the area was resumed. Elizabeth had good reasons, therefore, to travel south on her 1591 progress.

³⁶ E.P. Cheyney, *A History of England*, p. 284; R.B. Wernham, *After the Armada: Elizabethan England and the Struggle for Western Europe, 1588-1595* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 324.

III. Viscount Montague, the Sussex Community and Catholicism

*If instead of good argument
We deal by the rack
The Papists may think
That learning we lack.
(Elizabethan ballad)*

According to John Bossy 'there were very few Catholic gentry in the South-East (Kent, Surrey, east Sussex), and fewer still in the South-West, from Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to Land's End. Between these extremely barren areas, in west Sussex, Hampshire and the adjoining fringes of Wiltshire and Dorset, they were comparatively numerous.'¹ Roger Manning estimates that in the 1560s Catholics outnumbered Protestants by almost two to one in West Sussex.² The Catholic faith of both the Montague family and of the people of the area is crucial for the understanding of the entertainment of 1591 and need, therefore, to be examined. The government had to determine the level of religious, hence political commitment, offered by Montague and his community. Thus, a progress into Sussex which included a visit to Montague seemed a sensible idea.

In a recent article, Curtis Bright distinguishes between three different modes of aristocratic Catholicism in the late Elizabethan period: accommodation, survival, and resistance.³ He cites the Earl of Worcester as an example of accommodation because he flourished in the 1590s, in spite of his faith. The Earl of Arundel is Bright's example of the resistance mode. Arundel's father, the Duke of Norfolk, had

¹ John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), p. 100.

² *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), p. 259.

³ 'Caressing the Great: Viscount Montague's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Cowdray, 1591', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 127 (1989), 149.

been executed as a traitor in 1572. Arundel himself remained “loyal” until he attempted to flee in 1585. He had become a Roman Catholic in September 1584, but had managed to keep his conversion quiet until the following April, when he tried to escape to the Continent. However, government agents had watched his every step, and he was captured and imprisoned in the Tower, where he died in 1595. Significantly, one reason for his “treason” was that he felt dishonoured by the Queen.⁴

Viscount Montague, according to Bright’s categorization, would be a survivor. Indeed he suffered no major penalties for his Catholicism, but Elizabeth and her councillors apparently never fully trusted him. Neither did Montague inspire much confidence because he was involved in subversive, and even treasonous, activities from the earliest days of Elizabeth’s reign, as will be discussed below.

Viscount Montague came from a staunchly Catholic family. He was born Anthony Browne in 1526, the eldest of seven sons of Sir Anthony Browne, Knight of the Garter, and Master of the Horse to Henry VIII. Sir Anthony had a splendid career and was in great favour during Henry’s reign. In 1540, for example, he was sent to the Court of John of Cleves to act as proxy for Henry at the marriage to his fourth wife, Anne. When the King died, Browne received a legacy of £300 and was appointed guardian to Edward and Elizabeth. It was Browne who rode in Edward’s coronation procession as Master of the Horse. Sir Anthony had been granted the former monastery of Battle Abbey in East Sussex on 15 August 1538, only three

⁴ Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 41ff. For biographical information on Arundel see DNB, sub “Philip Howard, 1st Earl of Arundel”.

months after its dissolution. He was also given grants of other monastic lands, among them the priory of St. Mary Overy, Southwark, where he built his town house known as "Montague Close". Although he was a devout Catholic, he does not seem to have had any scruples over accepting former monastic property. Other monastic lands were given to his half-brother Sir William Fitzwilliam, Earl of Southampton. These were Easebourne Priory, in the parish of Cowdray in West Sussex, the Cistercian abbey of Waverly in Surrey, the monasteries of Calceto and Bayham near Arundel, and lands belonging to Newark priory and Syon abbey, all of which Browne inherited on Southampton's death.⁵

It was at Cowdray that the entertainment for Queen Elizabeth took place in 1591.⁶ We do not know precisely when the house was built but can be sure that it was in existence in 1538, because late that year the Countess of Salisbury, having incurred Henry VIII's wrath by becoming implicated in the affair of the Nun of Kent, was held for many months under house arrest there. She was then transferred to the Tower where she was executed on 27 May 1541.⁷

Sir Anthony had seven sons and three daughters by his first wife and two sons by his second wife. He died in Byflete on 6 May 1548, and his eldest son Anthony succeeded him. Like his father, he was a man of great ability and a staunch Catholic who, despite occasional outward conformity, never varied from the faith in which he had been brought up. He served three different rulers during the troubled years in

⁵ Julia A.E. Roundell, *Cowdray: The History of a Great English House* (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), p. 14.

⁶ For the precise location of Cowdray Park see the map of the 1591 progress in Appendix II.

⁷ John J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 364-5.

which state religion changed with every new monarch. He entertained both King Edward (1552) and Queen Elizabeth (1591) at Cowdray Park.⁸

Anthony Browne the younger was in high favour with Queen Mary, presumably because of his religion. In 1554, on the occasion of Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain, he was created Viscount Montague 'in consideration of the good and laudable service', which he, her 'faithful and beloved servant, hath done and still continues to do, as also his nobility of birth, early care, loyalty and honour'.⁹ 1554 also saw his appointment as Master of the Horse and he was sent on an important diplomatic mission to the Pope, together with Thirlby, the Bishop of Ely, and Sir Edward Carne. The three envoys were to discuss with the Pope the reconciliation of the Anglican Church to Catholicism. A year later he was made a member of Mary's Privy Council and a Knight of the Garter. In 1557 he acted as Lieutenant-General of the English troops at the siege of St. Quentin, in Picardy.

On Elizabeth's succession in 1558, Montague's glittering career immediately suffered a setback when he lost his seat on the Privy Council. Some Marian councillors were retained by Elizabeth. The Lords Arundel and Clinton, and the Earls of Pembroke, Derby and Shrewsbury, for example, kept their positions because Elizabeth realized that she needed their political strength on her side. Apart from these "political appointees", a few of Mary's professional civil servants, men of long experience like William Paulet, John Mason, Nicholas Wotton and William

⁸ Edward made his only progress in 1552. He visited three houses in Sussex: Petworth, Halnaker, and Cowdray, '... a goodly house of Sir Anthony Browne's, where we were marvelously, yea rather excessively banketted'; qtd. in Roundell, p. 23.

⁹ Quoted in Roundell, pp. 23-4. Browne had been knighted, together with forty other gentlemen, at Edward VI's coronation.

Petre, were also retained. In an attempt to destroy the Marian power structure, however, Elizabeth replaced most of Mary's councillors with men of her own choosing. In the process, the most ardent Catholics were removed from the Privy Council. Thus, together with Viscount Montague, the Lords Hastings of Loughborough, Riche and Paget were dropped. These rejected lords, except for Paget, who was too ill, stood with the bishops against the change of religion when it was later debated in the House of Lords.¹⁰

In 1559 Parliament discussed the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. When the vote was taken, the Catholics failed to defeat the bill because most of the Lords Temporal would not vote against it. Thus it was passed in spite of the dissent of all the spirituality, together with Viscount Montague and the Earl of Shrewsbury.¹¹ Montague boldly and openly expressed his dissent from both Acts. Shrewsbury died only a few months later, but Montague was to stick to his principles. It was common knowledge that, even several years after the Act of Supremacy had been passed, it was evaded. This has been attributed partly to the laxity of Elizabethan officials, partly to the fact that the ecclesiastical penalty of excommunication no longer carried any secular sanctions.¹²

In order to close potential loopholes, the Parliament of 1563 passed an act broadening the scope of the Act of Supremacy 'for the assurance of the queen's majesty's royal power over all estates and subjects within her highness's

¹⁰ Norman L. Jones, *Faith by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1982), p. 32.

¹¹ HLRO, Lords MS Journals, IV, 38.

¹² Roger B. Manning, 'Catholics and Local Office Holding in Elizabethan Sussex', *BIHR*, 35 (1962), 47.

dominions'. It aimed at protecting the Queen from her domestic Catholic enemies, that is, those Catholics in the realm who wished to see Mary Queen of Scots on the throne instead of Elizabeth. Anyone who held office in the kingdom was now required to take the Oath of Supremacy.¹³ All persons had to take the oath if required to do so by a bishop or commissioner. Those who refused incurred the penalty of *praemunire* and the act made it high treason, therefore punishable by death on the second offence, to uphold papal authority. Having said that, the existence of a law does not necessarily guarantee its enforcement, and the oath continued to be evaded. We know that the Queen told Archbishop Parker not to demand the subscription to the oath a second time if it had been refused once before. Thus, no death penalties were invoked.¹⁴

The new act required all members of the Commons to take the oath. Those who refused could not sit and were excluded from Parliament. Catholic peers were exempted from taking the Oath of Supremacy and were not *per se* debarred from holding public office or sitting in the Lords.¹⁵ In practice, however, the government tried to minimize the influence of the Catholic noblemen by excluding them from high office, for example membership of the Privy Council or a lieutenancy. Due to the possession of lands and wealth, however, Catholic aristocrats could still continue to exercise leadership and considerable power in their rural communities. This is particularly applicable to Viscount Montague. On Elizabeth's accession he was immediately dropped from the Privy Council and in 1585 he lost his position as

¹³ John Warren, *Elizabeth I: Religion and Foreign Affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993), p. 67.

¹⁴ *Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, ed. John Bruce and T.T. Perowne (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1853), p. 174.

¹⁵ The legislation to this effect was only introduced in 1678.

Lord Lieutenant of Sussex and Surrey. Yet, he proved to be very powerful and influential in his local community. According to M.J. Kitch the 'palatial house at Cowdray, the village of Easebourne and the town of Midhurst became the principal centre of Catholic population in Sussex and remained so well into the 18th century'. The whole area was a 'self-sufficient community'.¹⁶ Indeed there is evidence that not only did the second Viscount Montague keep his own priests, as his grandfather had done before him, but also his own schoolteacher, doctors and midwives.¹⁷

The Earl of Northumberland, who had the sympathy of many peers, attacked the 1563 bill in no uncertain terms. In an attempt to win the support of these often powerful men, a clause was introduced that exempted all peers from taking the oath. The Catholic peers realized that they would not be in a position to defeat the bill, but they tried, with some success, to mitigate its effects. Viscount Montague, too, spoke against the bill. His argument was similar to Northumberland's, namely that the Catholics were living quietly and presented no threat to the realm. He asked darkly, 'What man is there so without courage and stomach, or void of all honour ... that can consent ... to receive an opinion and new religion by force? ... it is to be feared, rather than to die they will seek how to defend themselves.'¹⁸ This warning or veiled threat to the government may well have confirmed the suspicion and fear with which the Catholics were regarded by the Protestants at the time.

¹⁶ 'The Reformation in Sussex', in *Studies in Sussex Church History*, ed. J.M. Kitch (London: Leopard's Head/University of Sussex, 1981), p. 131.

¹⁷ Timothy J. McCann, "'The Known Style of A Dedication Is Flattery': Anthony Browne, 2nd Viscount Montague of Cowdray and His Sussex Flatterers', *Rech*, 19 (1988/9), 396ff.

¹⁸ T.J. McCann, 'The Parliamentary Speech of Viscount Montague against the Act of Supremacy, 1559', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 108 (1970), 51.

The Northern Rebellion of 1569 and other conspiracies, like the Ridolfi Plot in 1571, involved the mightiest of the Catholic nobility. Montague himself only narrowly escaped reprisal after the Ridolfi Plot. The interrogations of the Duke of Norfolk's secretary William Barker and of a certain Edmund Powell in September and October 1571 revealed that both Montague and his son-in-law, Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton, favoured Norfolk's marriage to Mary Queen of Scots. Under interrogation, Barker also mentioned that Montague's name was included on a list presented to Norfolk. Ridolfi himself had spoken to Montague and 'founde hym well affected', but Norfolk distrusted Montague, it was said, because he had prevented Leonard Dacre, the promoter of the northern Rebellion, from coming to him for assistance. Lord Lumley, too, had told Barker that Montague was favourably disposed to the proposed marriage.¹⁹ Apparently, the government had previously trusted Montague enough to send him on a special mission to Spain in 1561 and later to include him in the commission of the lieutenancy for Sussex during 1569. He may have been judged to be the ideal person to go on a diplomatic errand to Catholic Spain.

Even if Montague himself narrowly avoided trouble, he must have found some of his relatives very embarrassing. George Browne, his eldest son, was imprisoned as a result of implication in the Northern Rebellion, and so was his son-in-law Southampton.²⁰ Montague did not hesitate to help them. In the summer of 1570, Southampton and his wife were confined to Loseley House near Guildford under the custody of Sir William More, a close friend of the Montague family. Further trust was placed in Montague when the Privy Council wrote to Southampton informing

¹⁹ PRO, SP 12/85/64.

²⁰ DNB, sub "Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton".

him that 'the Queen's Majesty is well pleased and contented that you shall remain at Cowdray with our very good the Viscount Montague, your father-in-law.'²¹

Montague's precarious position was not helped either by the treasonous activities of a relative who was said to have served in the Armada and hanged after his ship had been captured, nor by his brother's subversive dealings.²² Francis Browne sheltered the first printing press of the Jesuit Robert Southwell in St. Mary Overy.²³ John Cornelius, a priest who was later executed, was often seen 'within [Montague's] house at St. Mary Overies.'²⁴ Montague Close became the meeting place for Catholics from many areas of England, but especially from Sussex, Surrey, and Hampshire. As early as 1589 Robert Gray entered Montague's service. Gray, a priest of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, reproached Montague about the error of attending Protestant 'heretical' services, which Montague had done occasionally for the sake of official appearance. Occasional conformity, with the principal motive of not falling foul of the authorities and the objective of protecting one's possessions and reputation, had become 'a form of estate management'.²⁵ More important still, it helped to protect and conserve English Catholicism. Bishop Smith, who knew the household well and later wrote a biography of Lady Montague, describes Montague's reaction to Gray's censure:

²¹ Loseley MSS, IV, no.18, printed in St. George Kieran Hyland, *A Century of Persecution under Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns from Contemporary Records* (London: Kegan Paul, 1920), p. 147.

²² A.J. Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans: The English Exiles at the Court of Philip II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963), p. 30n, Appendix III; CSP Span., Elizabeth, IV, 372.

²³ Christopher Devlin, *The Life of Robert Southwell, Poet and Martyr* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956).

²⁴ PRO, SP 12/188/37.

²⁵ Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 113.

Instantly putting off his hat and falling to his knees, both with a gesture of his whole body and with his tongue, he most humbly submitted himself to the censure and piously promised never thenceforward to be present at heretical service which all the rest of his life he exactly observed.²⁶

This story may be apocryphal but is instructive in that it reflects Montague's commitment to Catholicism.

Between 1569 and 1585, the period that represents the gradual transition of power from the old Catholic to the new Protestant aristocracy, Montague shared the lieutenancy of Sussex and Surrey with Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, who was a moderate Protestant, and William West, Lord De La Warre. Montague was very influential in the management of county affairs and patronage in Sussex but, due to his faith, was not left to run affairs by himself.²⁷ It seems that, rather than give offence, the government would attempt to secure a balance of power by promoting peers of different religious views. To begin with, a great deal of trust seems to have been placed in Montague and he was given a lot of room for manoeuvre.

Various explanations for this state of affairs during the 1570s and early 1580s can be found. Firstly, the government had not yet begun to perceive the potential danger which was posed by the seminary priests from the Continent. The Catholic missionary enterprise was only fully established in the mid 1570s. The first concerted effort by the Privy Council and the bishops to deal with recusants in Sussex did not come until after 1577. Secondly, Elizabeth 'usually acted on the

²⁶ Richard Smith, *An Elizabethan Recusant House, Comprising the Life of the Lady Magdalen, Viscountess Montague 1538-1608. Trans. from the Original of Dr R. Smith by Cuthbert Fursdon, O.S.B. in the year 1627*, ed. A.C. Southern (London: Sands, 1954), p. 19.

²⁷ For Montague's patronage in Sussex see Jeremy Goring, 'The Reformation of the Ministry in Elizabethan Sussex', *JEH*, 34 (1983), 345-66.

assumption that the Catholic laity would be loyal to her'.²⁸ In order to avoid a domestic rebellion among her Catholic subjects, or a foreign crusade, she preferred to employ persuasion rather than coercion in the hope that time, and a certain amount of pressure, would effect a final conversion. She consistently blocked attempts by her bishops and the Parliaments of 1571, 1576 and 1581 to make refusal to receive the Eucharist a statutory offence. An undertaking to include a similar clause in the anti-recusant legislation of 1593 was also rebuffed.²⁹ Thirdly, the Queen seemed to be content with outward conformity. In June 1570 she issued a declaration stating that it was not her intention that her subjects 'should be molested either by examination or inquisition in any matter ... of faith ... as long as they shall ... shew themselves quiet and conformable ... and not obstinate to the laws of the realm'.³⁰ As long as people did not break the law and were seen to conform, Elizabeth did not seem to mind what precisely they thought or in what they believed.

Government policy was based on the principle that religious dissidence was to be punished only when it threatened national security and the established order. William Cecil's treatise *The Execution of Justice in England* of 1583, aimed mainly at the Continent as propaganda material, claimed that Catholics, if they were persecuted, were pursued not as heretics but as enemies of the state.³¹ When individuals openly defied the law, the government needed to be seen to be doing something. Thus Catholics attending mass at the houses of the French and the

²⁸ Joel Hurstfield, *Liberty and Authority under Elizabeth I* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1960), p. 12.

²⁹ M.C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion*, p. 99.

³⁰ Quoted in Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 246; the same point is made by Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (New York: Walker, 1967), p. 104.

³¹ Ed. R.M. Kingdon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), esp. pp. 11, 36.

Spanish ambassadors in London were arrested and examples were made of prominent men and women who were Catholic sympathizers. Lady Hobbblethorne of Essex, Lady Cary and Sir Thomas Stradling of Glamorganshire spent time in prison during the early 1560s. On the other hand, when in 1598 Elizabeth learnt that Lady Katherine Cornwallis, the widow of a favoured Court official, was being harassed because of her recusancy, the Queen gave orders that she 'would not have the Lady Katherine molested for not attending church'.³²

In July 1585 both Buckhurst and Montague were replaced as Lords Lieutenant by Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham. Buckhurst was reinstated in August 1586, and shared the lieutenancy with Howard until the end of the reign. Montague, however, was never reinstated. Buckhurst's temporary absence from his position may be explained by the imprisonment of his daughter-in-law, Lady Margaret Sackville, who was an ardent Catholic. Montague's non-reinstatement, once hostilities with Spain had started, can be partially explained by the fact that he was an ardent and outspoken Catholic and the regime was hesitant to trust him in the circumstances.

As a result of the increasing militancy of the Catholics overseas, the dominant voices in the government had decided on a tougher policy towards English Catholics. The proposal to bleed the recusant gentry white by stiff fines was introduced in the Parliament of 1581 with the Act of Recusancy, the most important penal law after the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. It raised the fine for non-attendance at church from 12 pence to 20 pounds per lunar month. Very few were able to pay 260 pounds every year, and very few did.³³ The Act also specified

³² HMC Salisbury MSS, VIII, 41.

³³ The Elizabethan year had thirteen lunar months.

that continued failure to pay fines biannually could result in the seizure by the Exchequer of the goods and two-thirds of the lands of the defaulting recusant. It needs to be stressed again, however, that the Act was not uniformly enforced.³⁴

The laws penalizing recusancy were mild compared with those against missionary priests and those aiding and abetting them. By the 1570s the old Marian priests were dying off and legislation was enacted by Parliament to cut off the source of candidates for the priesthood, who were beginning to be trained at the English College at Douai, founded by Cardinal Allen in 1568. A law of 1571 forbade English subjects to go overseas without a licence beyond the duration of one year, under pain of confiscation of all property. Finally, a statute of 1585 made it necessary only to prove that a man was a Jesuit or seminary priest in order to secure a conviction for high treason. It also made it a capital crime to provide aid or comfort for priests. Also, in 1585, special commissioners were appointed for disarming recusants as well as separate commissions for discovering recusants and seminary priests.³⁵

It is interesting to review how this anti-Catholic legislation affected the population of Sussex where Viscount Montague had his power base. Religious changes in that county over a period of four decades illustrate a more general trend in the survival of Catholicism. As could be expected, we find an overall decrease in the number of families that could be called Catholics. However, there was a marked increase in the number of recusants. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign there were some thirty-three Catholic families among the leading gentry of Sussex. By 1580 that

³⁴ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 138.

³⁵ BM, Harley MS. 703, fol.68v.

number had been reduced to twenty-five, but fifteen of them could be considered recusant. This trend continued into the 1590s, which saw a further reduction in the number of the Catholic gentry but again a slight increase in recusancy.³⁶

It has been pointed out that the survival of Elizabethan Catholicism owed a great deal to social and geographical factors. Much depended on the conservatism and inaccessibility of the remoter areas. The survival of Catholicism was not confined to the North. Despite the general Protestant tendencies of the southern and south eastern counties, it can be estimated that among the leading gentry and aristocracy in West Sussex Catholics outnumbered Protestants by almost two to one in the 1560s.³⁷ Nor does the Elizabethan Settlement seem to have made too big an impact in the first fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign. The Church of England Bishop of Chichester, Barlow, felt aggrieved enough to complain in 1569:

They have yet in the diocese, in many places, images hidden up and other popish ornaments; ready to set up mass again within twenty four hours' warning. [Battle] is the most popish town in all Sussex. ... Many bring to church the old popish primers, and use to pray upon them all the time when the lessons are being read and in the time of the litany.³⁸

The leadership of the recusant gentry was drawn from the old families that went back to the 15th century or earlier. Their political, social and religious views tended to be conservative. Roger Manning has pointed out the striking fact that many of the families that became recusant under Queen Elizabeth had achieved their positions in society by service to earlier Tudor monarchs. Thus, Sir John Gage enjoyed a career under both Henry VIII and Mary. He was a relative of Montague's father and of Edward Shelley of Warminghurst, who was to be hanged, drawn and quartered at

³⁶ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 259.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³⁸ Quoted in Geoffrey Regan, *Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 77.

Tyburn in August 1588 for helping a priest.³⁹ The Brownes/Montagues and Gages were the cornerstones of Catholicism in Sussex over several generations.

In the 1580s and 1590s the recusants were turned out of offices they considered their birthright and were increasingly subjected to penalties for non-conformity, which resulted in their increasing withdrawal from county and parish affairs:

This was a most unfortunate result of the English government's anti-Catholic religious policy, since most of the Catholic gentry were unreceptive to the dark political overtures of the Catholic Reformation that originated in Spanish fanaticism or in the minds of embittered exiles. The Government's purpose in enforcing religious uniformity was to promote social and political unity and to avoid the civil wars of the continent, but this policy succeeded only at the cost of alienating a not unimportant segment of society.⁴⁰

The natural reaction of the Catholic gentry was to draw closer together to preserve their faith in the face of persecution. Marriage alliances and economic interdependence were the result. The Montagues, Shelleys, Gages and Copleys formed a tightly-knit clan of recusant families. We know that the second Viscount encouraged fellow Catholics to settle under his protection. Almost half the convicted recusants in the 1620s lived in the two parishes of Easebourne and Midhurst.⁴¹ These recusant families provided much of the Catholic leadership in Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire and maintained a network that smuggled priests from the South-East ports up to London. The new seminary priests that began arriving after 1574 were badly needed. Without them, Catholicism might have died out within two generations, and the regime was hoping that the old faith would wither away quietly. Only the houses of the gentry could provide the protective seclusion

³⁹ *Lives of the English Martyrs*, 2 vols, ed. E.H. Burton and J.H. Pollen (London: 1914), I, pp. 416-20; *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs*, ed. J.H. Pollen (London: Catholic Record Society, 1908), pp. 105-6.

⁴⁰ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, pp. 154-5.

⁴¹ West Sussex County Record Office, Ep.I/15/1 (1624-28).

needed. Their homes in Sussex proved --by their geographical location-- a particularly strategic link between the continental seminaries and London, where the wealthier gentry had town houses and relatives. From there the priests would then spread into other counties.

There were two main routes for smuggling priests up to London. One was via Battle Abbey, Montague's house in East Sussex, the Gages' seat at Bentley, Hampshire, and the Copleys' house at Gatton, Surrey. The second route went via the Shelleys' house at Buriton, Hampshire, and Mapledurham in Oxfordshire, the house of George Cotton at Warblington on the Hampshire-Sussex border, across the border to Montague's Cowdray Park in West Sussex. From there the priests were smuggled to the Shelleys at Michaelgrove in the rape of Bramber, and then they usually moved up to London to Southampton House.

The second Viscount Montague's Book of Household Rules informs us that in 1595 the Montague household at Cowdray required thirty-seven different classes of officials and servants to staff the house. It cannot have been much different in the first Viscount's time, who had died only three years previously. A household this size needed watching, especially since it was known to the government through its spy network that priests were smuggled across Sussex by Montague and his Catholic friends. Obviously, the government were keen to gather information on such activities. In 1586 Privy Council spies accused six of Montague's servants of harbouring priests. On another occasion John Shelley of Buriton and a friend, both gentlemen retainers of Montague, were accused of accompanying priests, whom they had disguised in Montague's livery, through Sussex.⁴²

⁴² Christopher Devlin, *The Life of Robert Southwell*, pp. 218-9, 128; CSPD, II, 352;

Failure to be actively subversive should not be equated with loyalty. One can only be sure of disloyalty, that is overt opposition, including that shown by Montague's own family. In the 1590s the succession question remained wide open. Hopes and fears –depending on where people stood– of England's return to Catholicism after Elizabeth's death, were abundant. Therefore, wily Catholics wished to survive until the Queen's demise, which surely had to be imminent. Cardinal Allen, who had founded the Catholic college at Douai in 1568 and Father Parsons, a Jesuit also living in exile, had formulated a long-term strategy to win their fight for Catholicism. Although 'some Catholic gentlemen believed in a right to resist', by 1591 others knew that 'the King of Spain and the Pope would not attempt to invade England relying only on the support of the English Catholics, whom they know to be disarmed, impoverished, detained in prison and utterly unable to assist them in such enterprise'.⁴³ Montague nearly chose exile in 1569, but decided to stay, probably to safeguard family and fortune. He was certainly loyal to his family, but after 1585 not necessarily to the Protestant regime.⁴⁴ It has been stressed by various scholars that Montague 'tried very hard to combine devotion to his religion with a most meticulous display of loyalty'.⁴⁵ That could be exactly the point, however. Was it any more than a display?

352; APC, XIV, 224-25.

⁴³ Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 180, 139.

⁴⁴ On Montague's possible exile see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 346-7.

⁴⁵ R.B. Manning, 'Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montague: The Influence on County Politics of an Elizabethan Nobleman', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 106 (1968), 104.

An intriguing episode took place in 1588 at the time of the imminent Armada. A letter was produced whose first page asserts that it was 'found in the chamber of one Richard Leigh a Seminarie Priest, who was lately executed for high treason committed in the time that the Spanish Armada was on the seas'. It has been repeatedly claimed that Burghley himself, taking advantage of Montague's well-known loyalty to the Queen, forged the letter supposedly written by a Catholic priest to Mendoza, who was then the Spanish Ambassador in France, and that he then had it published as a pamphlet.⁴⁶ According to that letter, the first man to appear at Tilbury where Elizabeth's troops were gathering was Montague, who although aged and sick, vowed that 'he would hazard his life, his children, his land and his goods' to defend his country. The writer adds that he 'was very sorry to see our adversaries so greatly pleased therewith'.⁴⁷

The letter and the account it gives may or may not be fictitious. Burghley was certainly cunning enough to invent such a story and employ it for propaganda purposes. Its message, namely that one of the greatest Catholics in the land was prepared to support the Queen in her fight against the Spanish invasion, while at the same time many Catholics prayed for the successful completion of the Armada mission, could be used to discredit the Catholic clergy. It had also been claimed by exiles that the English Catholics would rally to the invasion. In the event, however, Thomas Tresham, another famous Catholic, and his Catholic friends petitioned to

⁴⁶ 'William Cecil and Elizabethan Public Relations', in *Elizabethan Government and Society*, ed. S.T. Bindoff et al. (London: Athlone, 1961), pp. 45ff.

⁴⁷ The pamphlet is entitled *The Copy of a letter sent out of France to Don Bernadino Mendoza, Ambassador in France for the King of Spain, declaring the State of England (1588)*, 24-5; part of the paragraph on Montague available in introduction to Sibbald D. Scott's "A Book of Orders and Rules" of Anthony Viscount Montague in 1595', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 7 (1854), 180-81.

fight for Queen and country, but their patriotism was rejected by the regime.⁴⁸ The Privy Council even decided to send some Catholics to the Tower while others were committed to Quinborough, Hartford, Maidstone or Leeds Castle and episcopal residences like the palace of Ely as a preventative measure:

... it is also certain that such as should mean to invade the realm would never attempt the same, but upon hope ... of those bad members that already are known to be recusants. It is therefore thought meet in these doubtful times, they should be looked to and restrained, as they shall neither be able to give assistance to the enemy, nor that the enemy should have any hope of relief and succour by them. ... cause the most obstinate and noted persons to be committed to such prisons as are fittest for their safekeeping. The rest that are of value, and not so obstinate, to be referred to the custody of some ecclesiastical persons and other gentlemen well affected.⁴⁹

The evidence for Montague's activities at the time of the Armada is inconclusive. Interestingly enough, he was left out of a list of those lords who were formally ordered to gather their retainers and attend Elizabeth as a protective bodyguard.⁵⁰ This may imply a certain mistrust of the Viscount. Eventually, Montague himself wrote to the Privy Council on 23 July, desiring 'to know if he should reserve his forces for the defences of the country, as he had not received letters as others have done for the attendance on her Majesty's person'. In his letter Montague pledged his loyalty.⁵¹ The Council responded with five letters to the Lords Sussex, Buckhurst and Montague between 24 and 27 July, and a sixth to Lord Cobham on 13 August.⁵² The letters imply an acceptance of the offer to defend the country, but the letter to Montague mentions an 'indisposicion' that will preclude him from leading his own forces. Other evidence from early September indicates that Montague, like other

⁴⁸ Cf. Adrian Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 94.

⁴⁹ Privy Council to Lieutenants of Sussex, 4 Jan. 1588; qtd. in Geoffrey Regan, *Elizabeth I*, p. 86.

⁵⁰ APC, XVI, 170.

⁵¹ SP 12/213/11; also Adrian Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I*, p. 94.

⁵² APC, XVI, 174-8, 194, 232.

leading recusants at the time, was 'ordered to remain under arrest in his own house', but only beginning on 25 August. This was asserted by a Genoese spy, who also reported that Sir James Croft had been arrested, a fact verified by other sources.⁵³

In any event, Montague's offer does not prove loyalty, since failure to offer support would definitely have been construed as lack of loyalty. Even a personal appearance at Tilbury does not necessarily demonstrate loyalty because it is always useful to gather one's personal retainers in a time of crisis. Moreover, in these circumstances it is worth recalling that Mary Queen of Scots signed the Bond of Association drawn up by Burghley and Walsingham in the aftermath both of the assassination of William of Orange and the discovery of the Throckmorton Plot in 1584. Signatories to the Bond pledged to defend Elizabeth by force and, in effect, murder anybody that was implicated in plots against her. Does the fact that Mary signed the Bond demonstrate her loyalty to Elizabeth? Surely not.

Viscount Montague died in 1592, a year after his entertainment of the Queen, protesting to God his membership 'in the unitie of his Catholicke church' and beseeching 'the most blessed virgin Marye mother of Xriste and all the holie companie of heaven to recommend my weakness and synnefull soule unto the aide and assistance of his infinite grace and mercy.'⁵⁴ His son Anthony had predeceased him by a few months, therefore his grandson Anthony Maria succeeded him as second Viscount Montague.

⁵³ APC, XVI, 249-50.

⁵⁴ *Prerogative Court of Canterbury (Somerset House), Register of Wills*, 22 Neville.

Montague's heir continued his grandfather's work when he succeeded him to the Viscountcy on 19 October 1592:

His spiritual inheritance included the position of leading Catholic layman in Sussex, and indeed a claim to such leadership in England; the provision of chaplains at his three houses, a close association with the English Benedictines and Franciscans, and a home base for the Archpriests and later the Bishops of the English mission, and the leadership of close-knit Catholic communities centred on Easebourne and Midhurst, and at Battle, surrounding his Sussex houses.⁵⁵

In 1602 John Ellis, an apostate Catholic turned informer, stated that the English Catholics depended more on the second Viscount Montague than any other person in England.⁵⁶

For his close associations with Catholic priests, he and his family suffered some persecution. In June 1594 the house of the Dowager Lady Montague, his grandmother, was searched on the orders of the Privy Council and the priests found there were interrogated.⁵⁷ In 1604 Montague was imprisoned in the Fleet for a vigorous speech in Parliament against the implementation of the recusancy laws.⁵⁸ He was heavily implicated in the Gunpowder Plot, but due to good connections -- his father-in-law was Lord Buckhurst, first Earl of Dorset, Lord High Treasurer of England-- he was only condemned by the Star Chamber to pay a fine of £4000 and to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure. In the event, he escaped more lightly than his friends because he compounded for the fine and was released from the Tower after approximately forty weeks. Significantly, Guy Fawkes was a member of the Montague household at Cowdray for four months in 1591, where he occupied

⁵⁵ T.J. McCann, "The Known Style of A Dedication Is Flattery", 397.

⁵⁶ HMC, Salisbury MSS, XII, 367.

⁵⁷ APC, XXIV, 328; SP 12/245/138.

⁵⁸ CSPD, VIII, 127; for the speech see Lords MS Journals, II, 328-9.

the respectable position of footman to the first Viscount. In 1593, after Montague's death, Fawkes served at the table of the second Viscount at Montague Close. On the day of the Gunpowder Plot the second Viscount had planned to be absent from Parliament, probably due to a hint from Sir Robert Catesby himself.⁵⁹

The historiography of Elizabethan Catholicism oscillates between diametrically opposed angles. According to one view, all Catholics faced efficient and ruthless persecution that did not distinguish between one Catholic and another. The state is portrayed as 'virtually totalitarian in its violent and intolerant response to religious dissent'.⁶⁰ Another view holds that the regime was uninterested in the religious beliefs of the Queen's subjects provided they did not become active traitors, and argues that Elizabeth was content with token conformity. Yet another view stresses the regime's total inability to enforce its wishes even in relatively minor matters such as regular attendance at church. This is put down either to the absence of an efficient central bureaucracy or powerless or corrupt ecclesiastical commissions in the provinces, the continuing importance of local factions based on family relationships or economic influence in the counties.⁶¹

As usual, the truth lies somewhere between these extremes. The persecution people suffered was very real. The government's long-term aim was the ultimate disappearance of Catholicism, regardless of the apparent political loyalty of any particular Catholic. Interestingly, of the sixteen Catholic families whose payments accounted for most of the recusant fines in the years after 1587, none was ever

⁵⁹ Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1996), pp. 149, 196.

⁶⁰ M.C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion*, p. 205.

⁶¹ R.B. Manning, 'Catholics and Local Office-Holding in Elizabethan Sussex', 61.

accused of treasonous activities. This suggests that they were singled out because of their prominence as bastions of recusancy in their counties.⁶²

However, persecution varied considerably in severity from individual to individual, from place to place, and period to period. During the first decade of Elizabeth's reign the regime proceeded cautiously. It could not be in the new Queen's interest to pursue an aggressive anti-Catholic policy that might upset domestic peace and foreign relations. A long-term approach was adopted in the hope that the habit of attending Church of England services would achieve what pressure and punishment could not. Michael Questier has pointed out that the pressure to attend a form of worship that they disliked might only serve to increase people's alienation from the established church, and could therefore turn out to be counter-productive for the state. If compulsion remained the only reason for conforming, this conformity signified nothing in religious terms. It might well be permanent, but was essentially a form of social adjustment.⁶³ Alexandra Walsham argues persuasively that this kind of conformity was likely to take the form of the adoption of a "church papist" stance rather than an outright renunciation of Catholicism. She stresses that, in the absence of an efficient bureaucracy, "conformity" could be but a temporary expedient, a brief, even unrepeated, response to the harassment of a singularly zealous magistrate or crusading prelate'.⁶⁴

⁶² F.X. Walker, 'The Implementation of the Elizabethan Statutes Against Recusants, 1581-1603', PhD thesis (London, 1961), pp. 275ff.

⁶³ *Conversion, Politics and Religion*, pp. 99, 114.

⁶⁴ *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1993), p. 74.

It is true to say that it was outward conformity that was expected of the laity, and indeed most Catholics remained loyal to the Queen, even in the face of intense persecution in the 1580s. This political loyalism proved possible because of the particular nature of Elizabethan persecution. Catholics faced heavy punishments, economic difficulties and political harassment, but they never faced, as a group, a threat to their very survival, nor were they, as individuals, confronted with total economic ruin if they did not relinquish their faith. There was never a clear choice between violent resistance on the one hand and total obliteration on the other.

The Queen herself made sure that there were no martyrs for the Catholic cause. The 1563 legislation that anyone opposing the Oath of Supremacy twice was to be punished with death was circumvented by the instruction to Archbishop Parker not to offer it more than once.⁶⁵ Even bishops deprived of their position did not receive the death sentence or end their days in the Tower. This state of affairs made accommodation and evasion easier and more plausible choices.

Evasion seemed to be the most promising approach, and the Catholics would habitually play down the political relevance of their faith. This was most easily achieved by stressing their loyalty to the Crown.⁶⁶ Viscount Montague and Lord Dacre, his brother-in-law, attempted to make a subtle distinction between the Pope's spiritual and temporal powers. They declared that they had a duty to support the head of the Catholic Church if he came in peace, but stressed they would act against him if he came in war.⁶⁷ Catholicism often proved to be a major political and

⁶⁵ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 52.

⁶⁶ A. Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ P. Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 202.

economic handicap, but few families were entirely ruined by the financial penalties of their recusancy. The regime's objective was to pressurize them into conformity, to milk them of money, but not to reduce them to such penury that they might become a charge on the community or were forced into rebellion. By 1586 the Privy Council was beginning to recognize that recusancy could not be eliminated, only controlled, and that a religious minority could be a permanent source of income.⁶⁸ However, Catholicism, combined with any hint of active political disaffection, usually proved to be disastrous, as can be seen from the example of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel.

At Queen Elizabeth's accession in 1558 Viscount Montague had a choice between his faith and his career. Almost immediately it became obvious that Montague would never abandon his faith when in 1559 he was the only temporary peer to speak out against the Act of Supremacy in the Lords, and when, only four years later, he opposed the act compelling all officeholders and clergy to swear to the royal supremacy. This act specifically laid down that supreme spiritual authority was vested in the Crown. As a Catholic who acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Pope, the Viscount naturally felt unable to subscribe to it. His outspoken Catholicism no doubt harmed Montague's career. Nonetheless he was allowed to run affairs in Sussex together with the Protestant Lord Buckhurst, who was to become 'the linchpin of the 1590s', until the outbreak of hostilities with Spain in 1585.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ S. Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, pp. 57-8.

⁶⁹ John Guy, 'The Elizabethan Establishment and the ecclesiastical polity', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 129.

That year was a turning point for the English Catholics in general and Montague in particular. In 1585 Montague was permanently dropped from the influential post of Lord Lieutenant. There is evidence that the Privy Council thereafter actively tried to destroy Montague's local patronage and power. Curtis Breight suggests that the 1591 progress entertainment be viewed under the aspect of Montague's increased marginalization after 1585.⁷⁰ The rapid erosion of Montague's personal influence coincides with the national crackdown on Catholics that had been rather tentative in the 1570s and became more oppressive in the 1580s.

However, Montague was not treated very harshly and several factors may account for his comparative success. He compromised to a certain extent and the regime tried to placate him in turn. During the early part of Elizabeth's reign Montague conformed by attending Church of England services occasionally. After the late 1580s, when he had become a thoroughgoing recusant, his peerage, as well as court connections, probably prevented him from suffering harsh penalties. Even more important might have been the fact that he was no convert to Catholicism. His only "offence" was the fact that he refused to abandon the religious beliefs in which he had been brought up. Arnold Pritchard suggests that he was never caught 'in anything politically suspicious', which is clearly not the case.⁷¹ As we have seen, Montague was implicated in a few enterprises that, from a government point of view, were politically highly suspicious.

The entertainment the Viscount laid on for Queen Elizabeth in August 1591 is not as straightforward as it may seem at first glance. Montague was certainly not

⁷⁰ 'Caressing the Great', 150.

⁷¹ *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England*, p. 45.

overwhelmed by the honour of the Queen's visit. In the circumstances, it also seems unlikely that her visit was intended as a honorific gesture. It makes more sense to view the Queen's decision to go to Cowdray during her southern progress as a way of checking up on Viscount Montague who, although he had been deprived of the important post as Lord Lieutenant, was still very influential within his remote Catholic community. In the next section I will argue that the entertainment (text) reflects a certain amount of negotiation for power between Viscount and Queen. During the event there are some disturbing moments that could be interpreted, if not as subversive, then certainly as assertive on the Viscount's part.

IV. The Cowdray Entertainment of 1591

Play at subtle games
(*Troilus and Cressida*, IV.iv.89)

IV.1 Cowdray Park

Before we consider the entertainment text and the event, it seems advisable to take a close look at Cowdray House, which formed the backdrop and stage for the entertainment.

Elizabeth and her entourage arrived at Viscount Montague's house in West Sussex on Saturday, 14th August at 8 o'clock in the evening, having dined at Farnham Castle on the way. This part of Sussex was particularly inhospitable and notorious for its extremely bad, muddy roads. It was comparatively inaccessible, and only very dry summers made the roads passable. Even as late as the 18th century royal judges could barely be persuaded to go beyond Horsham or East Grinstead, on the northern border of Sussex, to hold assizes.¹ Arrival at Cowdray, after what was a laborious journey at best, must have been a relief. The fact that the Queen decided to undertake such a relatively difficult and uncomfortable journey suggests that she considered her visit to be of considerable importance.

Cowdray was approached from Midhurst by a raised causeway, which was lined by a double avenue of elm trees. To one side of these trees the little conical mound of St. Anne's Hill could be seen, on which had stood an ancient castle. To the other side lay the park, 'having great variety of ground in it and well wooded with pines,

¹ Roger B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), p. 8.

firs and other evergreen trees'. Some of the finest Spanish chestnuts could be found there as well. The avenue opened into a grass forecourt and it was one of the porter's duties, together with the poor of the parish, 'to keep the long alleys without the gate, and the Green before it'.² The green was separated from the alleys by the River Rother, whose banks were so steep, however, that the river was hardly noticeable until one reached the small stone bridge of two arches crossing it.

From the bridge, the whole west front of the house was in view. Cowdray was built in the form of a rectangle, enclosing a space of turf measuring one hundred feet (west to east) by one hundred and forty (south to north). In the centre of that green court stood a fountain. Although the house had been built between 1520 and 1543 by Lord Southampton, its appearance had changed very little by 1781, when Samuel Grimm made his water-colour sketches. The immediate surroundings, however, had by that time altered significantly due to landscape gardening. Unfortunately, the house was destroyed in a fire in September 1793 and only ruins remain. We must therefore rely on Grimm's water-colours to give us a vivid impression of the house and some of its rooms at the time of Elizabeth's visit in 1591.³

The first impression of Cowdray House was one of a powerful stone facade that was regular and symmetrical (Illustration 1, Appendix II). A great gatehouse formed the centre, whose turrets were capped with cupolas, and between which could be seen the lantern of the great hall. To either side of the gatehouse were battlemented wings

² For a very detailed description of Cowdray see Julia A.E. Roundell, *Cowdray: The History of a Great Country House* (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), pp.111ff and passim; also Ian Dunlop, *Palaces and Progresses of Elizabeth I* (London: Cape, 1962), pp. 150-165.

³ Cf. the reproductions of Grimm's watercolours in Appendix II.

measuring one hundred and eighty feet. These ended in massive hexagonal towers with tall bay windows. The eastern side contained the principal lodgings and main body of the house, including the great hall, the porch and various sitting rooms. The west and east side of the quadrangle were linked by two galleries. Whereas the exterior of the north gallery was plain, the facade of the south gallery was broken by two square towers (Illustrations 2 and 3). Behind the battlement, a number of red brick chimney-stacks broke the skyline. The large and regularly spaced windows softened the overall effect of the immense strength of a fortified house.

The eyewitness account of the progress entertainment at Cowdray informs us that, upon the Queen's first appearance in the elm-lined avenue, loud music began to play. It stopped suddenly when she reached the bridge, and this was apparently the signal for the first speech. A Porter dressed in armour, standing between two carved janitors, bade Elizabeth welcome. He carried a club in one hand and a key of gold in the other, which he handed over to Elizabeth after his speech. Thus she was symbolically given possession of the house. One cannot help noticing the superficial similarities with the beginning of the Kenilworth entertainment of 1575. On both occasions Elizabeth was greeted by a Porter who carries a club and the keys to the house, and his "companions" are tall figures carved out of wood. After both speeches the keys to the house are handed over. However, the Porter at Cowdray is not as subservient and fulsome in his welcome as the one at Kenilworth, and his speech and actions can be interpreted differently, as will become apparent on closer examination of the event.

Having listened to the Porter's speech, the Queen alighted and embraced Lady Montague and her daughter, Lady Dormer. Where Montague himself was at the time we are, unfortunately, not told. However, he seems not to have been a member of the official "welcoming committee", nor did he rush out to meet his sovereign on the way in order to accompany her back to his house, as was a frequent practice.⁴ Only a month later the Earl of Hertford was to ride out with three hundred of his men, all splendidly attired, to provide a magnificent escort for Elizabeth on her way to Elvetham Park, the Earl's house in Hampshire. Since the account of the Queen's welcome is detailed enough to give Elizabeth's reply and reaction to the Porter's speech, mentions that Lady Montague was 'weeping in her bosome' and even quotes the Lady verbatim, it is a reasonable assumption that had Montague been there for the Queen's arrival, the eyewitness would have made mention of it. This reading is supported by the fact that we are informed that Montague and his sons, the sheriff of the shire and 'a goodlie companie of men', escorted Elizabeth to her dining place (somewhere between Cowdray and Chichester) when she departed six days later.

If indeed Montague was not present to greet the Queen on her arrival, he was walking a fine line between an open *lèse-majesté* at worst and a gesture of non-cooperation at best. He certainly would have taken the wind out of her sails by not having to witness the Queen's display of power when she arrived with 'a great train'. However, in view of his Catholic background and previous problems with the Crown, Montague had to be very cautious not to antagonize Elizabeth unnecessarily.

⁴ On the occasion of her visit to Kenilworth in 1575 the Earl of Leicester had met the Queen at Long Itchington (circa seven miles from Kenilworth) to accompany her back to the castle.

An open gesture of defiance was unthinkable, but the mere refusal to turn up on this occasion may have had a similar effect from Montague's point of view.

We can only speculate about whether Montague was present when Elizabeth arrived and what effect his possible absence might have had. It soon becomes clear, however, that the whole of the Cowdray entertainment reflects, if not a subversive tendency, then certainly a good measure of assertiveness on the Viscount's part. It could even be claimed that delicate negotiations for power between the monarch and one of her most powerful aristocrats were conducted via the entertainment. Naturally, Montague was in no position to challenge the Queen's general authority, but through the entertainment he could lay claim to, and emphasize, his position of power within Sussex and the greater Catholic community.

In order to get access to the quadrangle, and thus to the house, the Queen had to pass through the gatehouse. It was closed by massive wooden doors, and had above it the achievement of Viscount Montague, carved in stone, and, higher up, a clock. Having passed through the gatehouse, Elizabeth would first have seen the eastern side of the quadrangle with its rich architectural ornaments. Its most important features were the three high-set traceried windows and the magnificent mullioned window, reaching from the ground to the parapet of the roof, lighting the great hall known as Buck Hall. Two tall, many-lighted bay windows belonged to the withdrawing room, the great chamber and the parlour. The front was all of freestone, and although asymmetrical, it was well balanced. Over the battlement parapet rose richly-ornamented brick chimney-stacks. The high-pitched roof of the hall was crowned with a magnificent lantern or louvre. To the right, the south side, of the

quadrangle, was the porch. It was built of stone, and possessed beautifully carved fan vaulting. It was through this porch that the Queen would have entered the house.

The porch opened directly into a wide passage running across the house. From this passage the great hall was entered by two doorways fashioned in the carved screen beneath the gallery (Illustration 4). The hall measured fifty-five feet in length, twenty-six feet in width, and sixty feet in height from the floor to the louvre. Although the hall was quite large, its dimensions are not unheard of in country houses.⁵ The louvre was a striking feature of the house. It took the form of a slender cupola of three storeys in height, and was ornamented on the outside by nine vanes of gilded metal placed in rows on each side of the cupola and ranged above one another like a stepped gable. The open hammer-beam roof was fashioned of oak and the floor paved in white marble slabs.⁶ At the south end was a gallery that was probably intended for the musicians of the household. The wooden screen covered with elaborate and delicate carvings stretched across the hall just below the gallery. The hall was wainscoted on its three remaining sides with cedar panelling that corresponded in height with the screen. Above the cornice of the wainscoting and the screen were placed eleven bucks which gave the hall its name. These animals were carved in oak at life size.

The windows in the Buck Hall were of stained glass that displayed the family arms. The great bay window, with its five mullions, showed the arms of England and France, as well as the arms of Henry VIII. The three traceried windows were also of

⁵ The hall at Penshurst Place measures 62 feet by 39 feet, the one at Dartington Hall (Devon) 69 feet by 37 feet.

⁶ Examples of very similar roof constructions can be seen at Hampton Court and Christ Church, Oxford.

stained glass, showing the escutcheons of Fitzwilliam (Lord Southampton's family), Sackville (Lord Buckhurst who was related to the Montagues), and of the Montagues themselves. The great staircase, covering an area thirty-six feet long by seventeen feet wide, was on the eastern side of the hall.

From the foot of the staircase a door led into the dining-parlour. This room measured thirty-six by twenty feet. It had a large bay window overlooking the quadrangle, and another window looking to the east. The parlour boasted some large historical pictures that occupied the whole length of both sides of the room. The three pictures on the left (south) wall had as their subject Henry VIII's campaign in France. The three other paintings on the right (north) side of the room depicted the French attack on England in 1545, the sinking of the Mary Rose, and a 'View of the Procession of King Edward the Sixth from the Tower of London before his Coronation'. Sir Anthony Browne, Montague's father and Henry VIII's Master of the Horse, was certainly shown in three of these paintings. Another set of three historical paintings could be found in the great dining room at the head of the staircase. One of them represented 'two knights running at tilt' in one of the jousts of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. The English knight was Sir Anthony Browne, acting for Henry VIII, and he was shown as he was successfully unhorsing his French opponent.⁷ Quite obviously, the Montague family was proud of their epic achievements under previous monarchs, and Henry VIII in particular. This emphasis on past glories, which in itself is neither unusual nor particularly remarkable, added some piquancy to Elizabeth's visit in view of the fact that six years previously Viscount Montague had been stripped of his position as Lord Lieutenant of Sussex.

⁷ I am indebted in my account to Julia Roundell's book (see note 2 above), who gives a vivid description of Cowdray House.

Thus, he had been publicly dishonoured and was never to hold office under Elizabeth again. He certainly had reasons to feel resentful towards his royal visitor.

Above the parlour were two large withdrawing rooms, opening into each other, each having a window overlooking the quadrangle. One of these rooms communicated with the Velvet Bedchamber, which became the Queen's bedroom. The Montague family moved to Easebourne Priory for the duration of Elizabeth's stay, thus leaving the house to her and the more important members of her entourage, such as her Privy Councillors. This practice was by no means uncommon, but for Montague it offered the advantage of not having to share his home with people towards whom he might well feel some bitterness.

Cowdray House occupied an acre and its grounds were very extensive. They were to play an important part in the entertainment because none of the shows seems to have taken place inside the house, neither in the great hall nor the great chamber, which in similar country houses, according to Mark Girouard, had evolved into 'the ceremonial pivot of the house'.⁸ Besides the park and the unique Close Walks, lawns extended eastwards from the house to a moat filled from the River Rother. The Close Walks consisted of four narrow avenues of old yew trees forming a square. This square measured about 150 yards each way and has been likened to a 'Gothic cloister' by Julia Roundell.⁹ It was here that Elizabeth went for walks (usually in the evenings) and encountered the Pilgrim and Wild Man on the Tuesday. It was also where she and the ladies and lords of the Court dined on the Wednesday and Thursday. On Wednesday evening another show took place by a

⁸ *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 88.

⁹ *Cowdray: The History of a Great English House*, p. 165

fishpond in the garden. Hunts were organized in the park on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

From an examination of the descriptions of the house and of Grimm's water-colours of Cowdray it becomes obvious that Montague possessed a residence which was more than suitable to receive the Queen and to stage an entertainment that was worthy both of the visiting monarch and the resident aristocrat. In the following discussion I shall be attempting to show that the entertainment Montague put on for Elizabeth functioned on several levels. As well as representing the traditional compliment to the Queen, and aiming to please her, Montague's own agenda can be detected in the entertainment. He used the royal visit as a vehicle to deflect suspicions of his treasonous activities for the Catholic faith, to preserve his honour in his community, and to create a sense of solidarity among the Catholics, locally and nationally. Curtis Bright has suggested that there may even have been an overseas "audience" for the Cowdray entertainment in the shape of the Jesuit Robert Parsons.¹⁰

IV.2 The Background to the Entertainment – Déjà vu?

The entertainment given by Viscount Montague for the Queen must have taken place in an environment charged with mutual suspicion. In 1591, in the context of post-Armada anxiety, open war with Catholic Spain, and real or suspected

¹⁰ 'Caressing the Great: Viscount Montague's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Cowdray, 1591', *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 127 (1989), 147. I am using Bright's transcription of the entertainment throughout, and all page numbers in the following refer to this transcript.

subversion of the regime by Jesuits and Catholic priests infiltrating the country, 'it was impossible not to regard recusant gentlemen as a potential fifth column, however much they might resent the aspersions cast on their loyalty.'¹¹ As previously explained, Montague was a thoroughly committed Catholic who was engaged in activities that were treasonous in the eyes of the law. To the regime the Viscount seemed suspect. In view of two recent assassinations of fellow sovereigns (William of Orange in 1584, Henri III in 1589) the Queen had to be vigilant. Montague, on the other hand, must have feared the unwelcome prospect of government agents snooping around in his house and local community.

Some estimate of the atmosphere surrounding Elizabeth's visit to Cowdray may be gleaned by comparing its circumstances with those of a royal visit that had taken place a decade or so earlier. During her 1578 progress into East Anglia Elizabeth visited the Rookwood household. Edward Rookwood was a young man from a Suffolk family of Catholics and his house at Euston happened to be conveniently situated half way between Bury St. Edmunds, where the Queen had been, and Kenninghall Palace, her next planned stop.¹² The fact that Rookwood was a Catholic could not have escaped the authorities when the itinerary for that year was drawn up. On the contrary, he was probably carefully chosen for that very reason and in order to make him an example. Word of what had happened to him would have spread in the immediate neighbourhood and also among the tightly-knit Catholic community.

¹¹ Zillah Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), 'Foreword' by David Loades, p. xi.

¹² One of Edward's relatives, Ambrose Rookwood, from Coldham Hall at Stanningfield, to the south of Bury St. Edmunds, was executed for his involvement in the Gunpowder Plot.

We know that one of the major objectives of the 1578 progress was to deal with the problems created for the government by old Catholic families who were not prepared to accept the Church of England, although it had been in existence for twenty years. The Queen and Privy Councillors set out fully briefed on the identities and whereabouts of dissidents, and Rookwood's case shows that they were neither inclined to ignore nor to tolerate the *status quo* any longer.

Unfortunately, the only detailed account of events is that by Richard Topcliffe who was notorious for being an extreme anti-Catholic and who became 'one of the most odious and detestable government officials in British history.'¹³ He made the persecution and torture of Roman Catholics his occupation and seems to have derived some perverted pleasure from it. It is more than likely, therefore, that his account is biased, but it is instructive all the same.

After an initial, amicable, meeting between the Queen and her host, Rookwood was summoned by Lord Chamberlain Sussex, castigated for daring to come before the Queen (Rookwood had been excommunicated for his Catholicism), and ordered to leave his own house. To make matters worse for Rookwood, one of the pieces of plate that had been brought by the royal household was said to have "gone missing", thus giving Court officials a legitimate reason to search the house. Topcliffe reports that a statue of Our Lady was found hidden in a hayrick and subsequently carried into the Queen's presence who was watching some country dancing. Elizabeth ordered the statue to be burnt there and then. According to Topcliffe, the locals carried out her order promptly, 'to her content and unspeakable joy of every one but

¹³ C.R.N. Routh, *Who's Who in Tudor England* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1990; revised and enlarged edition by Peter Holmes), p. 335.

some one or two who had sucked of the idoll's poysoned mylke'.¹⁴ The Spanish Ambassador's somewhat more sketchy account of the same event mentions that an 'altar with all the ornaments thereupon ready for the celebration of Mass' was found.¹⁵

Whatever it was that had been discovered, the evidence was judged to be incriminating enough for Rookwood to be summoned within days before the Court and the Bishop in Norwich, where he was questioned regarding his recusancy. Rookwood was sent to prison but released a couple of months later on the payment of guarantees because he was said to have conformed. However, he was found to have "returned" to his faith (which he probably never abandoned in the first place) and was still paying heavy fines for his recusancy nearly twenty years later. Rookwood was not the only Catholic who suffered this treatment, but he was well known and had been caught "red-handed" during a progress. Court officials obviously had no scruples accepting a recusant's hospitality. On the contrary, the fact that they decided to stay at a known Catholic's house served to demonstrate the superior power and vigilance of the Crown, and gave warning that the 'open flouting of the law on religious observance would not be tolerated' any longer.¹⁶

¹⁴ Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History, Biography and Manners*, 3 vols (London: Nicol, 1791), II, p. 187.

¹⁵ CSP Spanish, Elizabeth, II, 607.

¹⁶ Z. Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress*, p. 153.

IV.3 The Cowdray Entertainment as an Event

When Viscount Montague was informed of the Queen's impending visit he may well have remembered the Rookwood incident and may have wondered what fate was to befall him. We do not know when precisely the Viscount heard of the royal progress, but it seems that he was given very short notice of the visit. On 10 July Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain, wrote 'in haste' to Sir William More of Loseley in Surrey, informing him of the Queen's intention to embark on her progress a fortnight later and her wish to visit him. The letter also states that Elizabeth was 'very desirous to go to Petworth and Cowdry'.¹⁷ Hunsdon emphasizes that the Queen was definitely going to visit Loseley, even if she were not able to go to Cowdray and Petworth. Therefore More would probably have been informed of the Queen's visit first, and Montague, to whom a visit was only a possibility at the time, somewhat later. But even if the Viscount was told on 10 July as well (in a separate letter that has not survived), it left him with only five weeks to make all necessary arrangements. This, combined with the apprehensions about the motive for and potential repercussions of Elizabeth's visit, might understandably have led to a certain degree of *angst* in the household. This would especially be the case because priests were habitually kept at Cowdray and the family had been, and continued to be, involved in activities that were judged to be treasonous.

A close examination of the text/event reveals three different levels of significance, which Curtis Bright labels 'loyalty', 'ambivalence', and 'self-assertion'.¹⁸ At first

¹⁷ John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), III, p. 80.

¹⁸ 'Caressing the Great', 150.

glance, the text of the entertainment is unproblematic. Its deceptively smooth surface has led scholars to believe that Cowdray was just another country welcome devised to display the host's (and his community's) loyalty and to curry favour with the Queen.

IV.3.1 The Loyalty Reading

On her arrival at Cowdray, the Queen was greeted, as was traditional, by music and a character who was to receive her with a speech and welcoming gift. This figure was the Porter, as it had been at Kenilworth in 1575. His welcoming speech seems conventional enough. It informs us that 'The walles of Thebes were raised by Musicke: by musick these are kept from falling'. According to an old prophecy, we are told, the foundations of Cowdray were insecure until steadied by the arrival of the 'wisest, the fairest and most fortunate of all creatures'. In case there existed any doubt as to who this creature was, the Porter explains that, over the years, he has seen many ladies enter the house of whom many were 'passing amiable, many verie wise', but 'none so happie' as Elizabeth. None of them fulfilled the prophecy. But the Queen's appearance has done just that: '... the musick is at an end, this house immoveable.' Elizabeth is eulogized with the usual abundance of epithets: 'O miracle of time, Natures glorie, Fortunes Empresse, the worlds wonder!' After fulsomely complimenting the Queen, the speech hastens to assert her host's unequivocal loyalty:

As for the owner of this house, mine honourable Lord, his tongue is the keie of his heart: ... what he speakes you may constantlie beleieve: which is, that in duetie and service to your Maiestie, he would be second to none: in praieng for your happinesse, equall to anie.

With the subsequent presentation of the key to the house Elizabeth was symbolically given possession of it. The Queen reacted graciously and seemed to acknowledge Montague's profession of loyalty: 'Wherewithall her Highnes tooke the keye, and said she would sweare for him [i.e. Montague], there was none more faithful.'

The speeches of the Pilgrim and Wild Man who Elizabeth was to encounter three days later while walking in the gardens, elaborate on the loyalty theme, extending it from Montague to the whole county as represented by a symbolic Tree of Chivalry. The Pilgrim, having delivered his speech, conducts the Queen to 'an Oke not farre off, whereon her Maiesties armes, and all the armes of the Noblemen, and Gentlemen of that Shire, were hanged ...'. The Wild Man then steps forth and explains that the tree symbolizes the county of Sussex ('The whole world is drawn in a mappe: the heavens in a Globe: and this Shire shrunke in a tree'). He assures his audience that all the men whose shields can be seen in the tree 'will bring their bodies, their purses, their soules, to your Highness', should Elizabeth be in any danger. Montague would be the first person, the Wild Man emphasizes, to sacrifice everything for his Queen if he were to be called upon. This is reminiscent of the Viscount's alleged appearance at Tilbury in 1588 when he pledged to support Elizabeth unreservedly.

The Netter's speech performed the next day reiterates the theme once again. The genuine loyalty within the whole of Sussex, and in particular at Cowdray, is distinguished from the 'deceptive appearances and treachery of the world outside Sussex.'¹⁹ The country dance performed by the local people and joined by Lord and

¹⁹ Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), pp. 86-7.

Lady Montague on the Thursday suggests the ‘beautiful relation’ among all classes, displayed for all to see. The knighting ceremony immediately prior to Elizabeth’s departure honoured Montague by proxy by including both his son and his son-in-law among the newly-dubbed knights. It conferred power on Montague by confirming his local status in front of both commoners and dignitaries. The Queen in turn would expect him to support her, militarily or otherwise, if she needed him. So far, so good.

Throughout the entertainment Montague professes his and his community’s allegiance to the Queen. He employs various fictional personae who all convey the same message— although a Catholic, he acknowledges and submits to her superior power as his sovereign. The Queen, for her part, accepts Montague’s repeated declarations of loyalty at face value and is pleased with the entertainment. Everybody seems happy with the final outcome of the visit.

This is the ‘loyalty’ reading. It is unproblematic, easy to understand and does not query potential underlying meanings that may be taken to be latent in the text and its performance. However, entertainments do not function on a single level of signification. We must remind ourselves that progress entertainments in particular were devised with different audiences in mind. There was the immediate audience consisting of the Queen, the Court, the local dignitaries, the host’s household and the neighbours, in short, everybody who witnessed the spectacle. Then there was the secondary audience. These were the people who would be able to read a printed account of the entertainment later. In Viscount Montague’s case, Curtis Bright has suggested that there may have even been an audience abroad in the shape of Robert

Parsons, the leader of the Jesuit mission living in exile.²⁰ We know that Parsons was kept informed about the state of Montague's health by a Catholic correspondent, which reflects Montague's importance as a bulwark of Catholicism.²¹ These different audiences would invariably interpret the same text, its nuances and unspoken implications differently.

IV.3.2 Other Readings

When we consider the historical context in which the entertainment took place and the importance of Montague as a pivotal Catholic figure, we should not be content with the 'loyalty' reading. In the following I shall attempt to show that there is a great deal of (intentional) ambiguity, and a certain amount of self-assertiveness to be found in Montague's Cowdray entertainment.

The Queen's arrival 'with a great traine' represented an exercise of royal power, and served as a reminder that, according to feudal law, all manors were ultimately held by the Crown. In this case, the royal arrival was matched by an equally militaristic welcome. The Queen was greeted by music, and then addressed by a 'personage in armour, ... holding a club in one hand, and a key of golde in the other.' As mentioned before, this device imitates, probably intentionally, the opening of the entertainment at Kenilworth Castle in 1575. Although there was a sixteen-year gap between the two entertainments, *The Princely Pleasures* at Kenilworth were such a magnificent fete that it surely remained in the public mind. As soon as he recognizes

²⁰ 'Caressing the Great', 147.

²¹ Cf. *The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan*, ed. A.G. Petti, (London: Catholic Record Society 52, 1959), p. 79.

the Queen, the Porter at Kenilworth gives himself up unconditionally and is submissive in both speech and gesture. He proclaims 'open gates and free passage to all, yeelds vp hiz club, hiz keyz, his office, and all, and on hiz kneez humbly prayz pardon of hiz ignorauns and impaciens'.²² The Porter literally disarms himself. This gesture is repeated and reinforced a little later by the Savage Man who breaks his 'oken plant pluct up by the roots' in two: 'thiz Sauage, for the more submission, brake hiz tree a sunder'.²³ Interestingly, at Cowdray the Porter hands over the key but retains his club. This is the point where the ambiguity of the entertainment begins.

As Helen Cooper has pointed out, the term "entertainment" is slightly misleading because rarely, if ever, were these pageants staged as pure, disinterested pastimes. Usually a deeper import was lurking beneath the surface.²⁴ It is significant that the Porters at Kenilworth and Cowdray, in spite of deliberate, striking similarities such as being given the same accessories (the key and club) and being similarly accompanied by figures carved from wood, behave so differently. Leicester's Porter, somewhat inappropriately 'wrapt all in silke', surrenders himself and the whole of the castle whose entrance he is supposed to guard only too willingly, as soon as he realizes that he is in the presence of his monarch. Quite obviously, Leicester's agenda differed from Montague's from the very beginning. The lavish, and financially crippling, Kenilworth entertainment was the Earl's last-ditch attempt to

²² Robert Laneham's Letter: *Describing A Part of The Entertainment Unto Queen Elizabeth At The Castle of Kenilworth in 1575*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907), p. 6.

²³ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁴ 'Location and Meaning in Masque, Morality, and Royal Entertainment', in *The Court Masque*, ed. David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 140.

win the Queen's hand in marriage. He was trying to demonstrate to Elizabeth and his peers alike that he was worthy of being the royal consort. At the same time, Leicester may have been attempting to dispel rumours that he was in love with Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex, whom he was to marry secretly in 1578 when she became pregnant by him. He set out to show Elizabeth that his castle, everything he owned, and he himself belonged to her only, and he would spare no effort or cost to prove that.

The beginning of the Cowdray entertainment mimics the beginning of the Kenilworth fete but follows a different agenda. Montague was trying to communicate that he was a powerful aristocrat in his own right, who was not going to be fawning or sycophantic in a bid for preference. Montague knew that, in view of his precarious situation, he could not afford to oppose or upset the Queen. He had to find a device that would please Elizabeth and make him politically less suspect while at the same time he had to avoid compromising his reputation as the foremost Catholic peer in the country. This was not an easy balance to achieve. The Cowdray Porter is dressed in armour and will not disarm himself. His welcoming speech is multi-layered and submissive only on the surface.

The text spoken by the Porter is littered with complex allusions to Greek myth, the *Aeneid* and medieval legend. The Greek and Latin allusions would not have been lost on somebody as well educated as Elizabeth. The very beginning of the speech refers to Amphion's musical construction of Thebes.²⁵ In the Cowdray text

²⁵ While his twin brother Zethos relies on his physical strength, Amphion uses his lyre (given to him by Hermes) to make the biggest stones fit themselves together to form the walls of Thebes; cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, XI.260ff.

Elizabeth's presence replaces the music which has kept the walls of Thebes from falling, and her entrance solidifies the structure of the house because she is 'the wisest, the fairest and most fortunate of all creatures'. This reads very much like conventional court flattery and obviously aims to please the Queen. The Porter's next reference to the petrification of his fellow guards, who were "killed" because they did not expect such a person as Elizabeth to exist and fell asleep, evokes the myth of Argus and Io as described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The hundred-eyed Argus, whose responsibility it is to watch Io, is lulled to sleep by the cunning and treacherous Mercury. Once Argus had fallen asleep, Mercury chops off his head.²⁶

There is more than one meaning to these classical allusions. Virtually all devices in this particular entertainment seem to consist of an unproblematic, easy-to-interpret surface level as well as a more oblique one, which very often queries or even contradicts the more superficial reading. On this deeper level, one could interpret the Porter as embodying the English Catholics or Catholic vigilance.²⁷ In this case, the message says that the Catholics, as long as they remain awake to danger, and armed, cannot be destroyed. Considering that it had been government policy to disarm known recusants so they would not pose an internal threat, and that Montague regularly provided shelter for priests and helped to smuggle them up to London, this makes an intriguing reading. The Viscount was committing high treason and had to be awake to the dangers that threatened his very life. The fact that the Porter would not hand over his club also suggests openly that his, and

²⁶ *Metamorphoses*, I.668f.

²⁷ For the suggestion that the porter be interpreted as a figure of Catholic vigilance, see C.C. Bright's article, 'Caressing the Great', 151.

therefore his master's, attitude was not as submissive as was to be expected. Negotiations for power were continually going on within and via this entertainment.

It is when one considers the precise readings of the text that possible ambiguities, coded and subtle as they are, begin to surface. The Porter's speech concludes with an adaptation of *Aeneid* I.76-77: 'Tuus O Regina quod optas/Explorare favor: huic iussa capescere fas est.'²⁸ The original Virgil text reads 'tuus, o regina, quid optes/explorare labor; mihi iussa capessere fas est', which Day Lewis translates as 'O queen, it is for you to be fully aware what you ask: my duty is but to obey'.²⁹ This forms part of a longer exchange between Aeolus, the master of the winds, and Juno. We are apparently witnessing a submissive gesture. Aeolus is prepared to serve Juno because she has favoured him: 'Through you I hold this kingdom ... as Jove's Viceroy; you grant the right to sit at the gods' table; /You are the one who makes me grand master of cloud and storm.'³⁰ Aeolus's obliging response to Juno's request for a storm to disperse the Trojan fleet describes the relationship between Elizabeth and Montague, namely one of clientage. If we consider the full story, however, the situation looks decidedly different. Some twenty-five lines earlier Virgil makes it clear that Aeolus's power is ultimately derived from Jupiter, and not from Juno. Moreover, Juno approaches Aeolus 'supplex', that is as suppliant. In essence, Juno offers Aeolus a deal: If Aeolus whips up the winds that will scatter and sink the Trojan fleet, she will give him her fairest nymph in marriage. Aeolus's response

²⁸ I would translates this as 'Yours, o Queen, is the opportunity to find out what you wish: it is this person's duty to execute the (your) orders.'

²⁹ All Virgil quotations are from R.A.B. Mynors' edition, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); translation in C. Day Lewis, *The Aeneid of Vergil* (London: Hogarth, 1952), p. 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

constitutes merely a ceremonious gesture of submission. The service Juno expects from Aeolus is an exchange, not a gift.

There is a possible subtext here. The Porter's allusion to Montague as Aeolus may not be as submissive as it appears. It rather places the Queen and the Viscount in a position of equal exchange. If we look forward to the song concluding the final dramatic show, we can see that the theme of a transaction between equals is reiterated: 'And when to us our loves seeme fair to be/We court them thus, Love me and Ile love thee.' It would be very daring for Montague to claim equality with the Queen openly. But the way it is handled here is far more subtle and therefore probably more acceptable.

In spite of the Privy Council's attempts to curb Montague's influence after 1585, he continued to exercise immense local power.³¹ Interestingly, Aeolus is 'rex', a king in his own right, who controls some rather violent elements. He is in a position to set them free whenever it suits him. This has some disturbing implications. Superficially, the Porter's mythological allusions can be read as a gesture of submission, with the Porter functioning as Montague's fictional *alter ego*. On a deeper level, they may be an assertion of parity in a transaction, and therefore a claim to power on Montague's part. There is certainly the potential that the speech is polysemous because the quotations, allusions and gestures are conveniently ambiguous.

³¹ Evidence for the fact that the Privy Council was trying to erode Montague's local influence, can be found in R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, pp. 234ff.

Breight rather ingeniously suggests that it was probably no coincidence that the Queen arrived just in time to frustrate Sunday Mass.³² It was known that the Montague family had their own priest(s) and that their services were open to all comers. The flourishing religious life in the Viscount's household is described by Bishop Richard Smith, who wrote a biography of Lady Montague.³³ A chapel had been built at Montague's house at Battle where Lady Montague moved after her husband's death in 1592. A sermon was preached there every week and on holy days. Mass was celebrated 'with singing and musical instruments'. Lady Montague evidently took pride in the great number of Catholics who resorted to her chapel. On special occasions as many as 120 people attended mass and about sixty of them took communion.³⁴ The same was probably true for Cowdray. The organization of regular masses constituted in itself a treasonous act, and was therefore an exercise of power in the local community. Lady Montague showed that she was committed enough to her faith to have mass read regularly and that she did not fear the consequences. Although we have no evidence that Viscount Montague was engaged in similar activities, it seems very likely. He may not have flaunted his faith as openly as his wife, but he did a great deal for the survival of Catholicism by more discreet means, such as maintaining the network smuggling seminary priests up to London and keeping priests in his various houses.³⁵

³² 'Caressing the Great', 152.

³³ *An Elizabethan Recusant House, Comprising the Life of the Lady Magdalen, Viscountess Montague, 1538-1608. Trans. from the Original of Dr. R. Smith by Cuthbert Fursdon, O.S.B. in the year 1627*, ed. A.C. Southern (London: Sands, 1954).

³⁴ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 159.

³⁵ Alexandra Walsham has pointed out that very often wives were more militant in their recusancy while their husbands as heads of the household had to conform at least occasionally in to order to avoid severe consequences for the family, in *Church Papists, Catholicism and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society/Boydell, 1993), pp. 81-2.

We can only speculate that the Queen's arrival and presence at Cowdray served to prevent the customary religious observance. If that was the case, this was an exercise of power on the Queen's part for all to see, including Montague's priest, local recusants and crypto-Catholics. The Queen could even have attended a Protestant service, as she had done at Kenilworth.³⁶ That would have constituted an even greater show of power on her part. Presumably, she would not have been so tactless, however, and there is no evidence that such a service took place. She had made her point in that Montague's normal Sunday service could not take place and his household priest probably had to disguise himself and mix with other household staff or the locals. Although Montague was fully committed to his faith, and had never tried to hide the fact that he was a Catholic, it would have been madness to have mass celebrated while Elizabeth was in his house. The eyewitness account merely informs us that Elizabeth rested on both Saturday (the day she arrived) and Sunday, 'being most royallie feasted' and that three oxen and 140 geese were consumed for breakfast alone on the Sunday. Obviously meticulous in relating details, the eyewitness would have mentioned the fact that a Protestant service was attended by Elizabeth and/or Montague, especially since there was nothing else to report on the Saturday and Sunday.

The Monday was spent hunting, a favourite aristocratic pastime, and one Elizabeth particularly enjoyed. The Queen set out on horseback at 8 o'clock in the morning accompanied by all her train. In the park a delicate bower had been erected, where her own musicians played for her. She was presented with a crossbow, with which she then killed three or four deer out of the thirty that had been 'put into a Paddock'.

³⁶ *Robert Laneham's Letter*, p. 12.

The Countess of Kildare, Montague's sister, was with her and killed one deer. Everybody returned to the house for dinner, where in the evening Elizabeth watched, from one of the turrets, sixteen bucks being pulled down by greyhounds. The typical function of hunting was to bind the Queen and her lords together in a bond of blood. Breight argues that it did not serve this purpose here and that it was not designed to provide meat for the table of the Court either. The day started with a bloodbath and culminated in an even greater one. According to Breight, the hunt in the 'loyalty' reading might emphasize hierarchical bonding, while the self-assertive reading might detect a symbolic threat, in itself another exercise of power. Could Montague really be implying that the Catholics could, equally with Elizabeth, kill the defenceless? Could Elizabeth want to show him that she could easily kill "his deer"?³⁷

Neither reading seems plausible. The hunt was probably organized simply because Elizabeth was known to enjoy hunting and Montague happened to have a well-stocked deer park. Hunting also made a welcome change from the usual speeches and allegorical shows. It is conceivable that, on another level, the occasion may have functioned ritualistically as a means of resolving the desire for mutual violence that may well have been seething under the surface, at least for some.³⁸ According to the law of 1585, the regime was obliged to have Catholic priests and their abettors put to death. Montague and his household, possibly the whole local community, were supporting Catholic priests as best they could, and the Privy Council had ample proof of that. On the other hand, the Catholics were obliged to

³⁷ 'Caressing the Great', 153.

³⁸ Ibid., 153.

reject Elizabeth's sovereignty and even attempt to assassinate her after the Papal Bull of Excommunication in 1570. This must have created great tension in the encounter, especially in the heightened pressure following the Armada. In the extensive slaughter, the deer would have become the scapegoats that took the place of reciprocal butchery.

On Tuesday the Queen went to have dinner at Easebourne Priory, where Monatgue and his family had temporarily moved. After a great feast for dinner the Court returned to Cowdray. Elizabeth was taking a walk in the garden when she encountered a Pilgrim who then addressed her. By now Elizabeth had become used to figures, mainly of a pastoral background, who might spring up anywhere in the landscape to ask for help, favours, or deliver flattering speeches.³⁹ The Pilgrim is no exception in that he addresses a short prayer and a petition to her. He explains that he has been travelling many countries in his search for antiquities and that he has been attracted to some in an oak tree nearby. When he had tried to approach the tree, however, a 'rough-hewed Ruffian', a Wild Man, had blocked 'the verie entrie' (to the wood where the oak can be found, as becomes clear a few lines further on) and had thrashed him, without so much as a word of explanation. The Pilgrim had then tried to find another entry but found himself opposed by a Lady named Peace, who verbally abused him and 'set [him] in greater heate then the blowes.' The Pilgrim had returned discontent and now asks Elizabeth to accompany him back to the oak because 'that rude Champion at your faire feete will laie downe his foul

³⁹ Cf. the entertainments at Kenilworth 1575, Wanstead 1578, Theobalds 1591 and 1592; also Bruce R. Smith, 'Landscape with Figures: The Three Realms of Queen Elizabeth's Country-House Revels', *Ren.D.*, n.s., VIII (1977), 110-15.

head: and at your becke that Ladie will make her mouth her tongues mue.⁴⁰ From this encounter, he hopes, the Queen 'shall finde some content: I more antiquities.'

This episode clearly alludes to the chivalric cult of Elizabeth. The Pilgrim and the Wild Man are stock romance figures and Elizabeth is cast in the role of the knight-errant. In the supposedly fortuitous encounter with the two other characters, she is appealed to as the protector of the helpless and weak. Pilgrims were traditionally unarmed old men, and the figure had Protestant as well as Catholic connotations. Elizabeth was obliged by the chivalric code to act on his request and deal with his attacker. The Pilgrim expresses the hope that Elizabeth will assist him, tame the ruffian and silence the lady, so that he can acquire more antiques. At the end of the speech Elizabeth is led to the Tree of Chivalry, where she is met by the Wild Man 'cladde in Ivie'. The figure of the Wild Man, his costume, and the power attributed to Elizabeth to subdue ruffians like him are again traditional devices. On progress the Queen had already come across them at Kenilworth and would do so again at Bisham in 1592.

The Wild Man is often portrayed as the guardian of secrets. The role as guardian of the heraldic tree in this case seems therefore appropriate. The tree was hung with the shields (the 'antiquities' the Pilgrim is after) of the Queen, her noblemen, and the gentlemen of Sussex. Jean Wilson concludes from this that the gentlemen of Sussex had chosen the chivalric mode to display their loyalty to the Queen. By hanging their shields in the tree they challenged anybody who denied Elizabeth's

⁴⁰ Jean Wilson suggests that 'mue' can be read as 'mute, as in trumpeting', cf. *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p.159, n.27.

supremacy to fight.⁴¹ This makes sense but it is only one reading. The Pilgrim's highly allegorical speech becomes fully intelligible only when Elizabeth meets the Wild Man.

The Wild Man addresses the Queen very courteously and sets out to explain the significance of the Tree to her. We are told that the Tree represents Elizabeth, the noblemen and county of Sussex:

The whole world is drawn in a mappe: the heavens in a Globe: and this Shire shrunke in a tree: ... This Oke ... resembles in parte your strength & happinesse. Strength, in the number and the honour: happinesse, in the trueth and consent. All heartes of Oke, then which nothing surer: nothing sounder. All woven in one roote, then which nothing more constant, nothing more naturall. ... Your maiesty they account the Oke, the tree of Iupiter.

The loyalty motif, first introduced in the Porter's speech, is reiterated here. The Wild Man emphasizes that the loyalty of the noblemen as well as of the ordinary people of Sussex is indisputable and concludes his speech with an explanation of why the entry to the forest must be defended:

This passage is kept straight, and the Pilgrime I feare hath complained: but such a disguised worlde it is, that one can scarce know a Pilgrime from a Priest ... Everie one seeming to be that which they are not, onely to practice what they should not ... though our peace bee envied [by them], by you we hope it shall be eternall: Elizabetha Deus haec otia foecit.

This allegory can be read as follows. The Lady Peace represents England's internal harmony, the Wild Man physical force, and the Pilgrim *is* a disguised priest. The priest finds himself unable to enter the forest (England and/or Sussex) and to steal the antiquities from the tree. The act of removing the arms would be equivalent to a seduction or conversion of the nobility and gentry to Catholicism. However, internal harmony and peace, combined with physical force, prove effective in thwarting

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 87, 158, n.3.

external Catholic aggression. This 'loyalty reading', an extension of Jean Wilson's interpretation, seems once more unproblematic. Having said that, we must remember that priests were able to enter England illegally, as everybody knew. It also seems puzzling that the priest should appeal to Elizabeth for help against Peace whom she then does not actually meet in the event. The Wild Man's speech is followed by 'A Dittie' which seems to have been the end of that day's shows.

However, there is also an ambiguous as well as a self-assertive aspect to this particular show. The unmasking of the Pilgrim as a symbolic priest on the estate whose owners specialized in the activity of not only protecting and sheltering, but also of *disguising* priests and smuggling them across the country, is intriguing, to say the least. It was widely known that the Montagues joined other local Catholic families in smuggling priests from the south coast up to London. They became the cornerstone of the whole network, with two of the main routes including Montague's two Sussex estates, Cowdray in West Sussex and Battle Abbey in East Sussex. The priests would be disguised as Montague's servants, wearing his livery. They would not be disguised as pilgrims, but it is the idea of disguise that is relevant.⁴² Montague may or may not have been aware of the government's knowledge of his subversive activities, but he knew that, due to his noble status, he could act with relative impunity.⁴³ This may explain the boldness of the allusion to a disguised priest, while his own household priest(s) probably mingled --in disguise-- with the commoners who constituted the public audience for (some of) the shows.

⁴² C.C. Bright, 'Caressing the Great', 154.

⁴³ Others were not so lucky: Edward Shelley of Warminghurst, Sussex, was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in August 1588 for helping a priest; cf. R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 144.

Bright points out an analogy between this disguising-of-the-priest episode and the 1588 'Letter' that supposedly reflected Montague's loyalty at the time of the imminent Spanish Armada. In the letter, the putative author-priest provides the regime's answer to those Catholics who would accuse it of unjustly executing priests:

... our Adversaries ... answered us: that no execution hath bene of any ... for their religion ... but ... they which have bene executed, have bene found to have wandred in the realme secretly, & in a disguised maner, which the Adversaries scornfully terme as Ruffians, with fethers and all ornaments of light coloured apparel, like to the fashion of Courtiers, and do use many means to entice all people ... not onely to be reconciled to the Pope, & Church of Rome, but to induce them by vowes and othes to renounce their obedience to the Queene.⁴⁴

Interestingly, the Cowdray entertainment not only reproduces some of the vocabulary from this passage but also the notion of disguise as such. Most importantly, the term 'ruffian' is reversed. In the 'Letter' it applies to the priests in disguise, but in the entertainment it is used pejoratively by the Pilgrim to signify the anti-Catholic Wild Man. Thus it is possible to argue that this show constitutes an oblique response to the 'Letter' that was being used as a piece of anti-Catholic government propaganda. Moreover, there is some evidence that some English spies on the Continent adopted the disguise of a pilgrim.⁴⁵ In one case, a man by the name of John Gale visited the college at Rome supposedly as a "pilgrim" to discover the names of English Catholic students for the benefit of the Privy Council.⁴⁶ If Montague was aware of this kind of deceit through his Catholic contacts, the figure of the Cowdray Pilgrim is definitely double-edged.

⁴⁴ *Copie of a Letter*, p. 10; my emphasis.

⁴⁵ For an account of some English agents abroad who chose the disguise of a priest see Albert S. Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans: The English Exiles at the Court of Philip II* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 60.

⁴⁶ PRO, SP 12/243/29.

The Pilgrim-Wild Man episode can be read as a message of solidarity for the Catholic faithful. The Wild Man's reference to 'Everie one seeming to be that which they are not, onely do practise what they should not', may well be applicable to the host himself. It could be a tantalizing reference to the known, or suspected, deceptiveness of Montague's "loyalty". If the Viscount was aware of the regime's knowledge of his activities, the gesture remains one of solidarity with his fellow Catholics. It is also a bold assertion of Catholic resistance to an increasingly oppressive situation. This is especially true if we consider the Jesuit Robert Parsons an intended (albeit removed) audience for the entertainment. It spelt out that Montague's spirit had not been crushed and that he was prepared to resist the pressures brought to bear upon him.

The final oblique message of this episode involves another adaptation of Virgil (this time of *Eclogue 1*).⁴⁷ '[Elizabetha] Deus nobis haec otia foecit' can be translated as "Elizabeth, a God, made this peace for us", and then it would merely reiterate the thought expressed in the final sentence of the Wild Man's speech: 'The heavens guide you, your Maiestie govern us: though our peace bee envied [by them], by you we hope it shall be eternall'. However, the Latin quotation is multivalent. "Otium" is an important concept in classical Latin and has more than one connotation. It means 'unoccupied or spare time', 'the leisure afforded by retirement from office', as well as 'peace or tranquillity'.⁴⁸ Here it could refer to the end of the Wild Man's speech as well as the Pilgrim's allegory. For the Wild Man, peace is an indisputable

⁴⁷ I.6; cf. *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, p. 1. Jean Wilson translates it 'God made this peace for us through Elizabeth' (*Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 159), which is a grammatical possibility, although Bright contests this reading ('Caressing the Great', 165, n.32). Whatever the translation, it does not seem to make a great difference to the interpretation of the whole passage.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

good. For the Catholic Pilgrim, however, it is symbolized by the unpleasant Lady called Peace who 'could never hold her peace'. On one level, the allegory suggests a peaceful country that is capable of resisting the invasion of a Catholic enemy, as discussed before. On another, it might also reflect Montague's current situation. The Viscount had plenty of free time after he had been dropped from the Lord Lieutenancy in 1585 and been thus forced to retire from the busy life of a courtier. Ironically, the Queen had provided *otium* for Montague by depriving him of his *negotium*, his post. For Montague this must have been an insult that was difficult to accept, especially if he really was as loyal to the Queen as he as he claimed.

The Dittie immediately following the Wild Man's speech concludes this episode. It is a conflation of Montague's "love" and the phoenix myth. Elizabeth would have listened carefully at this moment because the phoenix was one of the symbols traditionally associated with her, and her motto *Semper eadem* (Always the same) alludes to the phoenix myth. The Dittie claims, significantly in the last, the "punch line" of each stanza, that the phoenix is the 'rarest thing on earth except my love' and that 'True love is often slaine but never dies'. Like the phoenix, true love dies only to recreate itself. This may once again be seen as an allusion to Montague's loyalty. Although Elizabeth has done him wrong by depriving him of his post and by overtly or covertly suspecting him of disloyalty, his love for her, because it is true love, will never die. The last stanza reiterates this idea: 'True love which springs, though Fortune on it tread as camomel by pressing down doth grow/Or as the Palme that higher reares his head,/when men great burthens on the branches throw', only to give it a different twist. 'Love fansies birth, Fidelitie the wombe,/the Nurse Delight, Ingratitude the tombe', we are told. An entombment, however, implies a

permanence that is definitely beyond revivification. This love is literally dead and buried. Montague may be warning the Queen that he can only be “trodden upon”, “pressed down” and “slaine” so often. If she does not show any gratitude for his loyalty towards her, his love for her might well be extinguished.

On Wednesday 18th August the weather was good enough to dine in the garden. In the evening Elizabeth took another walk, enjoying the music that was being played for her. She was taken to a fishpond, where an Angler, who pretended to take no notice of Elizabeth whatsoever, delivered his speech. This was followed by a short dialogue between an Angler and a Netter, who then in turn addressed the Queen. After the Netter had had his say he presented Elizabeth with his catch and a Song of a Fisherman was sung. In the evening Elizabeth went hunting again, as she had done the previous evening. At first glance, the day looks fairly uneventful, but a closer look reveals some interesting elements.

The entertainment changes direction on the Wednesday. So far, it had been directed at the elite: the Queen first and foremost, her courtiers, the local nobility and gentry. Up to this point the “general public” would not have caught more than a glimpse of the entertainment. They would have been able to see Elizabeth’s arrival with a great train, which would hardly have gone unnoticed. They would probably have witnessed the subsequent greeting by the Porter, and observed the Queen and court riding across to Easebourne Priory on the Tuesday. But on Wednesday the revels are expanded to include complaints of commoners and a direct involvement of the locals.

The (very short) debate between the Angler and the Netter is the first and only instance of dramatic dialogue in this entertainment and represents a sub-group of the pastoral, the piscatory, as Jean Wilson has pointed out.⁴⁹ As Wilson has also mentioned, the piscatory shares both a classical background and Christian connotations with the pastoral. The life of the fisherman, working with his fellow fishermen or in peaceful solitude, living contentedly on the abundance of natural resources, lent itself to idyllic representation as much as the shepherd's life.⁵⁰ At Cowdray the fisherman's life is far from idyllic, however.

According to the Angler, life is difficult 'in this nibling world, where everie man laies bait for another', and especially 'Citie merchants' and 'Lande lords' are accused of attempting to trick the unwary. Robert Greene's five cony-catching pamphlets, written between 1591 and 1592, expose the same kind of trickery, and show that such behaviour was a common ground for complaint at the time. The situation was not going to improve either: the same accusations are fairly typical of Jacobean city comedy, where often apparently worthy and respectable burgesses, be they tradesmen, merchants or lawyers, are revealed as ruthless, immoral and self-seeking. The Angler at Cowdray criticizes metropolitan as well as local exploitation: 'Citie merchants bait their tongues with a lie and an oath, and so make simple men swallow their deceitfull wares', while 'Lande lords put such sweete baits on rackt rents, that as good it were to be a perch in a pikes belly, as a Tenant in theyr farmes'.

⁴⁹ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* 21.

The Angler complains that he 'cannot catch an oyster' and that the whole 'trade is growen to treacherie, for now fish are caught with medicins'. His first complaint may reflect the fact that in the Elizabethan era, maritime commerce and fishing were in decline in Sussex.⁵¹ At Hastings, the premier of the Cinque Ports,

... the towne is much forsaken, the fishing, by reason of the dangerous landing but little vsed, the riche and wealthy men gone thence, and the poore men yet remaining would gladly doe the like, if without offence of our lawes they might be elsewhere received.⁵²

Rye, the principal port of Elizabethan Sussex, was more prosperous, but its trade was falling into the hands of foreigners. Manning points out that fishing enjoyed a (brief) revival in the 1570s, but that by 1630 the port had no more than ten fishing boats.⁵³ The Angler's second accusation, that 'now fish are caught with medicins', appears to reflect local criticism. In a 1590 book on fishing a certain Leonard Mascall (who lived near Lewes) warns of the depredation made by 'fire, handguns, crossebowes, oyles, ointments, pouders, and pellets made to cast in the waters to stonny and poison the fish', as well as by nets, but he allows these destructive methods as the legitimate activity of 'certaine Gentlemen in their severall waters.'⁵⁴

The Angler's speech is strewn with allusions to deceit and treachery. It reiterates some of the ideas voiced by the Wild Man the day previously, only to put them into the different context of fishing. Having voiced his complaints, the Angler introduces the Netter thus: '... here be the Netters, these be they that cannot content them with a

⁵¹ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, pp. 4-7.

⁵² Royal Proclamation of 30 Oct. 1578 concerning repairs to be undertaken on the harbour pier, quoted in W.D. Cooper, 'Notices of Hastings', *Suss.Arch.Coll.*, 14 (1861), 84.

⁵³ *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Marcia Vale, *The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman, 1580-1630* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 52.

dish of fish for their supper, but will draw a whole pond for the market.' Before we can even catch a glimpse of the Netter, he is portrayed as an exploitative figure, somebody only interested in making money, a notion that will be reinforced by his subsequent speech.

When asked by the Angler how much he will charge for his catch the Netter replies that he will accept a noble. A "noble", which equalled 6s.8d., is obviously also intended to be a pun on "nobleman". The Netter demands either cash and/or nobility in exchange for his fish. His answer reflects the Angler's previous damning conclusion that 'Marchandize, Love and Lordships sucke venom out of vertue' and justifies his portrayal as being mercenary because he seeks to *ennoble* himself both monetarily and socially.⁵⁵

The Netter himself, on the other hand, draws a different picture. He portrays himself as a loyal and devoted subject to his sovereign: 'I come ... with a poore Fisher mans wishe, that all the hollowe heartes to your Maiestie were in my net, and if there bee more then it will holde, I woulde they were in the sea till I went thether a fishing.' He is prepared to go to a great deal of trouble to weed out the treacherous; those with hollow hearts, from the sincere. He claims that there are always people who will not accept things as they clearly are, and who are always intent on muddying the waters. If we assume that Montague saw the Netter and not the Angler as his fictional *alter ego*, it is not surprising that he would like this character to be perceived as ultra-loyal. In this case, the people attempting to muddy the waters would be those Privy Councillors who will not accept that Montague is as loyal as

⁵⁵ Cf. C.C. Breight, 'Caressing the Great', 155.

he protests. These are the same people who are constantly trying to undermine his position, they are 'carpers of state' and 'pearch higher than in duetie they ought'. Something should be done about them, the Netter suggests. The carpers should have 'their tongues pulled out', that is they should be silenced forever, and those assuming too high a position, pretending they are merely doing their duty, should be knocked off their perch. This interpretation incorporates a loyal as well as an assertive aspect. Montague (through the Netter) once again stresses that he is loyal to the Queen, and at the same time asks her to sort out her Privy Councillors who presume to pass judgement on him, wrongly, as he claims.

The Song of the Fisherman that concludes Wednesday's show has as its subject the character's, and by extension Montague's, love for the Queen. Thus it is similar to the song on the previous day. In Tuesday's song Montague had protested his undying love and asked for reciprocity, warning the Queen at the same time that unrequited love would die eventually. The Song of the Fisherman spells out explicitly what Tuesday's song had only alluded to. The 'Love me and Ile love thee' of the second stanza mirrors the exchange between Aeolus and Juno discussed earlier. It also describes the interdependence of the regime and its servants, and more particularly, of Elizabeth and Montague. If both sides love, or at least respect, each other, the relationship between the Queen and Montague will work. Montague is hinting here that there has to be a *quid pro quo*. He is, and will be, loyal, but the Queen must trust him, and must be seen to trust him.

Unfortunately, we have no eyewitness account for the rest of the event. The eyewitness/narrator explains that he was not present on the last two days but has

trustworthy reports of what happened. The final show performed for the Queen took place on Thursday. Again Elizabeth and the court dined in the privy walks of the gardens. The table was forty-eight feet long, twice as long as on the day before.

What was to follow in the evening emphasizes once more the 'beautiful relation' between the Montagues and their neighbours: 'In the evening the countrie people presented themselves to hir Maiestie in a pleasant daunce with Taber and Pipe. And the Lorde Montague and his Lady among them, to the great pleasure of all beholders, and gentle applause of hir Maiestie.'⁵⁶ The dance once more brings up and emphasizes the loyalty theme that pervades the whole entertainment.

Bruce Smith calls the Montagues' participation in the country dance 'a high-spirited breach of decorum'. It is far more than that, it is a highly significant choice.⁵⁷ From the theory of dance we know that dance can fulfil various different functions. It can release tension, generate social solidarity, and constitute a form of social protest.⁵⁸ Elizabeth herself loved to dance and country dances became popular at Court. This dance might originally have been devised to amuse the Queen, as at Kenilworth, when the refined society laughed at the country bumpkins. However, the dance also gave the Montagues the opportunity to convey a sense of solidarity and to reaffirm Montague's relationship with his neighbours at a time when the Privy Council was attempting to reduce, and even destroy, the local influence that he wielded.

⁵⁶ This corresponds to the ideals expressed, for example, in Ben Jonson's *To Penshurst*, ll.45ff.

⁵⁷ 'Landscape with Figures', 87.

⁵⁸ *Society and the Dance: The Social Anthropology of Process and Performance*, ed. Peter Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1-46; a contemporary example of dance as protest is given by Christopher Haigh, in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 215.

This part of the entertainment was open to the public. Everybody who came, either to perform in the dance or just as a spectator, would have seen what was to follow. The Montagues' participation in the dance was not merely a 'breach of decorum', as Smith claims, or an 'improvisation', as Breight asserts, but carefully staged by Montague for maximum impact.⁵⁹ The dance was the concluding element of the entertainment. It was the last opportunity for Montague to make his voice heard and communicate his message to Elizabeth. Therefore he would probably have thought about this last act very carefully, rather than take a chance and improvise. If orchestrated successfully, the dance would reiterate and underline the thoughts he had previously attempted to express. It would also be the final impression with which the Queen left Cowdray. The visual impact of the dance is crucial. It was stronger than anything so far in the entertainment. It was certainly easier to understand, especially for the common people who performed in it and those looking on.

The Queen, her 'Lords and Ladies', and the Montagues had dined together. In the evening the country people were admitted to present their dance. When the Montagues decided to take part in the dance they physically left court society and joined the commoners. Quite literally, they changed sides, albeit temporarily. The Montagues at the centre of their local community became one side, the Queen and her Court the other. In the dance the Montagues bind themselves physically to their neighbours, and in doing so make a two-way statement. To the locals the Montagues were proclaiming that they regarded themselves as part of them rather than of court society, which would have no doubt delighted the common people. A juxtaposition

⁵⁹ 'Caressing the Great', 156.

of “them” and “us” was conjured up. In front of the Queen and Court, the Montagues were parading their close relationship with their local community; a relationship that would provide a power base, should one become necessary.

If we recall Robert Laneham’s mocking passage on popular culture at Kenilworth, this interpretation of the Montagues’ choice is borne out. Laneham’s description of the traditional ‘brideale’ clearly ridicules the simplicity of the common people. The groom wears his father’s clothes, is ‘lame of leg, ... wellbeloued yet of hiz mother.’ The bride is described as ‘il smelling ... not very beautiful in deed, but vgly, fooul, ill fauored’.⁶⁰ Laneham would not wish to be associated with such people, and neither would the Earl of Leicester. One gets the impression that the country dancing was provided for the Court as a kind of coarse slapstick comedy, although the common people involved would of course have perceived it as a special honour to be allowed to dance before the Queen. At Cowdray the rigid class structure is overcome by a form of *communitas*, the *communitas* of the persecuted religious minority.⁶¹ The Montagues were making a powerful statement at the very end of the entertainment, but Elizabeth made sure that she presided over the final act of this quasi-theatrical performance.

The final sentence of the entertainment text is a meditation on one important aspect of this symbolic event: ‘The escutcheons on the Oke remaine, & there shall hange

⁶⁰ The passage on the country brideale before the Queen is in *Laneham’s Letter*, pp. 20ff.

⁶¹ The term “communitas” originates from Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); for an example of 17th century upper class exploitation of popular culture, cf. David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 63: ‘Sir Edward Parham ... was alleged to have promoted a church ale with bull-baiting, and to have joined in the morris dancing, “to get the love and affection of the common people”’.

together one peece by another.’ This implies hope for a unity among the Sussex nobility that did not exist already. More importantly, the mere existence of the Tree is an assertion by Montague on behalf of all upper-class families in Sussex of their honour and nobility, and therefore their right to bear arms. As mentioned previously, Montague must have felt dishonoured when he was dropped from his post as Lord Lieutenant in 1585, especially when at least one fellow Catholic was allowed to keep his position as Deputy Lord Lieutenant until 1598.⁶² Another kind of dishonour inflicted on Catholics was the attempt to disarm recusants. From the regime’s point of view, this was merely a precautionary measure, it was done ‘in the interest of national security’.⁶³ Montague seems not to have suffered this particular treatment, and we have evidence that in 1588 he was considered well armed.⁶⁴ His successor, the second Viscount, did not expect to be disarmed.⁶⁵ Thus it was probably no coincidence that the Porter did not relinquish his club together with the keys to the house when he welcomed Elizabeth on the first day.

⁶² Cf. Gladys Scott Thomson, *Lords Lieutenant in the Sixteenth Century: A Study in Tudor Local Administration* (London: Longman, 1923), pp. 127-8.

⁶³ B.W. Quintrell, ‘The Practice and Problems of Recusant Disarming, 1585-1641’, *RecH.*, 17 (1985), 208.

⁶⁴ As evidence that Montague was well armed in 1588, see PRO, SP 12/213/11.

⁶⁵ The 2nd Viscount obviously did not expect to be disarmed as can be seen in ‘“A Booke of Orders and Rules” of Anthony Viscount Montague in 1595. Edited from the original Manuscript’, ed. Sibbald D. Scott, *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, 7 (1854), 206.

V. The Aftermath of the Cowdray Entertainment

*The play may please
(As You Like It, Epilogue, 18)*

In order to evaluate the “success” (or lack thereof) of the Cowdray entertainment, Queen Elizabeth’s reaction, immediate and medium-term, needs to be examined. Since the eyewitness left following Wednesday’s show there is no detailed description of subsequent events. The reader is informed, however, that the entertainment ‘was such as much contented her Maiestie’, that ‘Her Maiestie [was] well pleased with her welcome’, while Montague was ‘thoroughly comforted with her Highnesse gracious acceptance’. According to these statements, the entertainment was a resounding success for Montague.

When the Queen arrived at Cowdray she listened first to the Porter’s fulsome protestations of Montague’s loyalty:

As for the owner of this house, mine honourable Lord, his tongue is the keie to his heart: and his heart the locke of his soule. Therefore what he speakes you may constantlie beleieve: which is, that in duetie and service to your Maiestie, he would be second to none: in praieng for your happinesse, equall to anie.

Her immediate response seemed very positive: ‘... her Highnes tooke the keye, and said she would sweare for him, there was none more faithful’. We must, however, place this exchange in the context of traditional court communications. It was not necessarily meant as sincerely as it sounded, neither was it necessarily meant to deceive. The exchange merely formed part of a courtly ritual, similar to a game, in which all players knew the rules and abided by them. We only need to remind ourselves that, as time went by, the picture of the Queen as drawn in poetry and portraiture was increasingly out of step with reality, and that both the courtiers and

the Queen were aware of this fact. However, this blatant discrepancy did not seem to make any difference whatsoever, even when both parties were overtly conscious of the fact.⁶⁶ To take an almost contemporary instance (though published just after Elizabeth's death) the Guise in Chapman's play *Bussy D' Ambois* (1604) criticizes the English for 'making semi-gods/Of their great nobles; and of their old Queen/An ever-young and most immortal goddess'.⁶⁷

Those who consider the Cowdray entertainment merely as a conservative exercise in upper-class loyalty fail to take its historical-political context into account. They disregard the conditions of Catholic survivalism in particular. Why did Montague continue to be involved in treasonous activities, such as sheltering priests and smuggling them to London, if he was so loyal? Why did Lady Montague, after her husband's death in 1592 and her subsequent move to Battle Abbey, promote so many Catholic activities that Battle became known as 'Little Rome'? Why was the second Viscount constantly in difficulties under James? He suffered almost a year's imprisonment and had to pay an enormous fine for his implication in the Gunpowder Plot. The answer can only be that they needed to "keep the faith".

The Montagues' aim was probably not merely to maintain a thriving population of Catholics, but in the circumstances, it was the only realistic objective. The regime's attitude to Catholicism within the two months following the events at Cowdray is instructive. Two royal proclamations were issued in October 1591. The first reveals governmental anxiety about Philip II's 'preparation of ... great forces for the seas

⁶⁶ On the so-called "Procession Picture", see Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Elizabeth I* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), pp. 94f.

⁶⁷ I.iii.11-13.

against our crown and dominions', which were 'greater for this year than ever he had before'. Philip was also accused of conspiring with English priests to foment a native English rebellion in support of a new invasion. The priests (together with Parsons and Allen) were said to have assured Philip of the support of 'men dwelling in sundry parts of our countries ... but specially in the maritimes'.⁶⁸ The 'maritimes' obviously include Sussex. Interestingly, the proclamation also emphasizes that only traitors have been and will be punished, and that 'none do suffer death for matter of religion'. As 'manifest proof' of this fact is cited that

a number of men of wealth in our realm professing contrary religion are known not to be impeached for the same either in their lives, lands, goods or in their liberties, but only by payment of a pecuniary sum as a penalty for the time that they do refuse to come to church.⁶⁹

Montague fits rather well into this category, and when the proclamation was drawn up less than two months after the entertainment at Cowdray the Viscount and his protestations of loyalty may well still have lingered on Elizabeth's mind. Montague's case could be used to demonstrate the "fair" treatment of Catholics, provided they were loyal. This would imply that he was regarded a loyal subject at the time. However, the same proclamation mentions, only a few lines further on, that 'it is certainly known and proved by common experience' that priests were sent into England 'disguised both in their names and persons', and that these priests might '... attempt to resort ... into services of noblemen, ladies, and gentlemen'. All who endeavoured to help them were 'worthy to be suspected and may be charged by law to their great danger.' This can be read as a warning to Montague that he was not in the clear yet. The proclamation proceeds:

⁶⁸ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1969), III, Proclamation 738, pp. 87, 89.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

We do order and straightly charge and command all manner of persons of what degree soever they be without any exception, spiritual or temporal, nobleman, gentleman, lord, lady, master or mistress, or owner whatsoever of any house, family, lodging, yea, the very officers of our own household, ... to make a present due and particular inquisition of all manner of persons that have been admitted or suffered to have usual resort, diet, lodging, residence in their houses, or in any place by their appointment, at any time within the space of one whole year now past and ended at Michaelmas last And to cause those inquisitions with their answers to be put into writing particularly, and the same to keep in a manner of a register or calendar to be showed when they shall be demanded.⁷⁰

Due to the perceived threat, Lords Lieutenant and their deputies were ordered to prepare local troops to repel an invasion. A new commission to hunt down priests was established at the same time.

The second proclamation of October 1591 ordered the commissioners to identify current recusants and especially those who harboured priests. Significantly, they were primarily instructed to interrogate local Catholic lay people, and only secondarily the suspected priests. The implication is that an intimidation of the recusants might well give information aiding the capture of priests. The intention was no doubt to frighten recusants into betraying priests who were already in the country and, more important, to discourage them from harbouring all newly-arrived priests. The government's attitude to recusants in general is expressed in the final clause of the proclamation: '... by their recusancy they do give cause of suspicion to be disloyal in their duties to the Queen's majesty and the state, or to favour the common enemies.'⁷¹

Not surprisingly the proclamations caused storms of protest from Catholic writers, both in England and on the Continent, Robert Parsons and Robert Southwell being

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 91-2.

⁷¹ Ibid., Proclamation 739, p. 95.

the most famous among them.⁷² Governmental suspicion and intolerance of English Catholics not only remained high but actually increased in vehemence after the Cowdray entertainment. The repeated assurances of Montague's loyalty might have convinced the Queen and council of this particular man's allegiance, but Catholics as a species remained inherently suspect.

Considered in this light, the events immediately prior to Elizabeth's departure on the Friday can be interpreted differently. The Queen's immediate response to the whole entertainment seems very positive. It is mainly this reaction that convinced scholars like Jean Wilson that Montague had achieved his objective and that Elizabeth was happy with the outcome as well:

The presentation of Lord Montague, despite his Catholicism, as the centre of the ultra-loyal men of Sussex would contribute to this emphasis on his personal loyalty and assure the Queen of his position of strength in the area, while the Queen's obvious favour shown to Montague would reassure his neighbours about the strength of his position with regard to the Queen, which his Catholicism might have caused them to doubt.⁷³

This is only half the story, however. Montague was probably successful in conveying to the Queen an idea of just how powerful he was in Sussex. Whether her visit to him was, or was intended as, a particular favour is highly debatable. It may merely have served as a reminder that, although he lived far away from the capital and Court, he was not beyond the Queen's power and a watchful eye was kept on his activities.

At first glance, the knighting ceremony immediately prior to the Queen's departure honoured the Montague family by including two family members among the six new

⁷² Cf. Peter Holmes, 'Robert Persons and an Unknown Pamphlet of 1593', *RecH*, 17 (1985), 341-7.

⁷³ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 143, n.19.

knights: Montague's son George, and his son-in-law Robert Dormer. One Henry Glenham was also knighted, about whom we seem to know nothing, and a certain John Caryll, a Catholic who was frequently in trouble because of his recusancy.⁷⁴ Caryll's inclusion supports the assumption that the government had no desire to exclude any but the most uncompromising Catholic from local offices, 'for the lure of public office might well be the deciding factor in a person's allegiance.'⁷⁵ We must also remember that local factions, resting on either blood relationship or economic influence or both, continued to be of great importance. Henry Goring and Nicholas Parker were the two other gentlemen who were knighted on this occasion. Not only were they Protestants, but both were government agents, rising local officials who would be appointed to the new Commission of the Peace in 1592. This commission had been 'reconstituted and strengthened by the addition of several magistrates of pronounced Puritan sympathies' because the 'commissioners in the 1580s were found to be too lax in their jobs of detecting recusants.'⁷⁶ Even as Elizabeth conferred superficial honour on two members of the Montague family who would not eventually be entrusted with local office, she advanced two other men who would soon be hounding recusant friends, neighbours, and retainers of Montague, even if not Montague himself. A certain piquancy was added by the fact that it was Lord Admiral Howard who performed the knighting ceremony on Elizabeth's behalf. It was Howard who had replaced Montague when he was dropped from the Lord Lieutenancy in 1585.

⁷⁴ R.B. Manning, 'Catholics and Local Office Holding in Elizabethan Sussex', *BIHR*, 35 (1962), 47-61 offers detailed information on the Caryll family.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁶ R.B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex*, p. 148.

After the knighting ceremony the Queen and her entourage left for Chichester. To all intents and purposes, the entertainment had gone without a hitch. In contrast to her arrival, when apparently no effort had been made to send out a welcoming committee, the Queen's departure was a more stylish affair. Montague, his sons, the sheriff of Sussex and a 'goodly companie of Gentlemen' accompanied her to her dining place, which was somewhere half-way between Midhurst and Chichester.

Even if Viscount Montague managed to convince the Queen and Privy Council of his loyalty, he did not have the opportunity to enjoy a position of trust for long. He died at the age of 65 at West Horsley (Surrey) on 19 October 1592 and was buried at Midhurst Parish Church on 6 December. The marble and alabaster tomb in which he was laid to rest had already been prepared during his lifetime. In 1851 it was moved by one of his descendants from Midhurst to Easebourne Church. Interestingly, Montague's epitaph fails to mention his most powerful position, i.e. the lord lieutenancy, and says nothing about his political career after 1566. It reads:

Here lyeth y ° bodie of y ° Right Honorable Sir Anthonie Browne, Viscount Montague, Chief Standard Bearer of England, and Knight of y ° Honorable Order of y ° Garter, whereof he was ancienst at his death, and one of y ° Honorable Privye Councill to Queen Marie, who as he was noblye descended from y ° Ladye Lucye, his grandmother, one of y ° daughters and coheyres of Lord Ihon Nevill, Marques Montague; so he was perfectly adorned with all y ° virtues of true Nobilitye. And in y ° 66 yere of his age he ended his lyfe, at his Howse at Horsley in Surrey, y ° 19 of October, 1592; and in the 34 yere of y ° raigne of our most soveraigne Lady, Queen Elizabeth.

This most honorable man, in y ° yere 1553, was employed by Queen Marie, in an honorable Ambassage to Rome, with Doctor Thyrlbie, Bisshope of Elye, which he performed to his great honor and commendation; and y ° seconde yere after he served Queen Marie, as Her Majesties Livtenant of y ° English Forces, at y ° Siege of St. Quentines.

In the yere 1559, Queen Elizabeth sent him Ambassador into Spain to King Philipp, and likewise, 1565 and 1566, to the Duches of Parma, then Regent of y ° Lowe Countries, all which he effected both wiselye and honorablye to y ° service of God, his Prince, and Countrie.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The epitaph is transcribed in Sibbald D. Scott, 'Cowdray House, and its

During Elizabeth's reign, only his embassies to Catholic powers are acknowledged. It seems that the last twenty-six years of his life had amounted to nothing that Montague felt was worth mentioning. Quite obviously, the Montague family placed their honour and deserts in the services rendered to the Catholic faith. In a culture whose aristocratic monuments 'commemorated the deceased principally as a public rather than a private person, listing their titles, offices and pedigree', Montague's epitaph is resoundingly quiet.⁷⁸

This is especially striking because in portraiture, the other important mode of public representation, Montague apparently subscribed to contemporary conventions. There was an early portrait of the first Viscount at Cowdray, 'in his coronation robes, his coronet in his hand, and wearing an immense ruff.' Unfortunately, this picture perished in the fire that consumed the house and many of its treasures in 1793.⁷⁹ Another (full-length) portrait of Montague, painted by Lucas de Heere, has however survived and can be seen at Burghley House. Again it depicts Montague in fine clothes, this time with the insignia of the Order of the Garter. Montague had been made a member of the Privy Council and a Knight of the Garter in 1555 under the Catholic Mary Tudor. Both pictures exhibit symbols of Montague's status as a peer of the realm and Knight of the Garter. On his tomb Montague is represented kneeling at an altar, 'wearing a suit of gilt armour, and over it the collar and mantle of the Order of the Garter.'⁸⁰ The fact that his epitaph fails to mention Montague's influential position as Lord Lieutenant can be read as a (final) gesture of defiance.

⁷⁸ Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 185.

⁷⁹ Cf. Julia A. Roundell, *Cowdray: The History of a Great English House* (London: Bickers & Son, 1884), p. 32.

⁸⁰ S.D. Scott, 'Cowdray House, and its Possessors', 189.

Until his dying breath, Montague considered himself first and foremost a Catholic and bound to the Catholic faith.

In terms of expenditure and bombastic addresses, the Cowdray entertainment lags far behind such famous progress entertainments as Kenilworth or Elvetham. Only a small cast was required, with no more than three people per show at a time. Three actors (two men and probably one boy who would have played the parts of the Nymph and the Lady Peace) would have sufficed. There were no expensive props that had to be bought or built especially for the occasion. Jean Wilson suggests that even the painted escutcheons, probably the most expensive of the props, might have been supplied by Elizabeth's Office of the Revels.⁸¹ We only know of a couple of presents given to the Queen: the Porter's golden key and the crossbow presented to her by the Nymph on Monday. The draught of fishes offered to her by the Netter can hardly be termed a present. Other presents may well have been given, but we know nothing of them. Apparently, Montague did not even have to hire additional musicians because the Queen brought her own, we are told. Neither did he have to make any changes to his house or go to extravagant lengths like the Earl of Hertford only one month later. In financial terms, the visit did not cost Montague all that much. The distinct lack of glamour and extravagance of the Cowdray entertainment can be attributed to the fact that Montague did not have much time to prepare for the Queen's visit (about three weeks). On the other hand, it is conceivable that he felt it was not worth the effort, especially since he was not looking for promotion or preferment.

⁸¹ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 158, n.1.

The Cowdray entertainment does not necessarily set out to challenge Elizabeth's power and is not inevitably subversive in character. Such interpretation would considerably overestimate Montague's power, while simultaneously underestimating the ruthlessness with which the Queen was prepared to act against the people perceived as enemies. There is not one simple reading. As we have seen, the text/event is deliberately ambiguous and open to interpretation because it was aimed at different audiences and had more than one objective.

The entertainment was an opportunity for Viscount Montague to enter into negotiations for power with the Queen. I would claim that by being quasi-subservient on one level and self-assertive on another, Montague was attempting to broker a deal with the Queen. The desired final outcome would be the understanding that Montague, who was very powerful in Sussex, would be loyal to the Crown and in return would not be prevented from practising his faith. The Queen, on the other hand, imposed her superiority as his monarch and would be able to rely on his allegiance. The ultimate objective was mutual respect and toleration. Unfortunately, Montague died a year after the entertainment, and we can only speculate how the relationship between the Viscount and the Queen would have developed in the aftermath of the Cowdray entertainment.

VI. THE EARL OF HERTFORD AND THE SUCCESSION DEBATE

Undue and unlawful copulation
(William Camden, *History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess
Elizabeth*, 1675)

Elizabeth's 1591 progress is particularly interesting in that, within a month, the Queen and Court visited two aristocrats who had little reason to love the regime. After staying with Viscount Montague at Cowdray in West Sussex between 15 and 21 August she visited the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham in Hampshire a month later, between 20 and 23 September. From the regime's point of view, this particular progress probably had the major objective of checking up on two somewhat suspect counties and two even more suspect aristocrats who might attempt to turn personal (and local) discontent to political advantage.

Chapters IV and V have attempted to show that Viscount Montague and the Queen were conducting delicate negotiations for power via a complex progress entertainment. Both parties followed different agendas, and both used the entertainment to their own ends. One of Montague's objectives was, so I have claimed, to allay suspicions about his (treasonous) activities undertaken for the Catholic faith. Montague's allegiance to the Queen is emphasized again and again throughout the entertainment. At the same time, the Viscount was seeking to impress on Elizabeth that he, although her loyal subject, was very powerful in his Sussex community and deserved to be treated with due respect.

In my discussion of the Elvetham entertainment I will endeavour to show that the Earl of Hertford's welcome for Queen Elizabeth shows interesting parallels to the Cowdray fete in that both entertainments are similarly complex, and both were chosen as vehicles in the negotiations for power between the aristocrat in question and his monarch.

Having said that, the Earl of Hertford's entertainment was designed with a very different objective in mind. I will argue that Hertford was attempting to stake a claim to the throne via his entertainment at Elvetham. Many people regarded Hertford's sons as first in line to the succession and considered them the only viable Protestant alternative to Mary Queen of Scots. Elizabeth was aware of public opinion and it would have given her visit to the Hertford family in 1591 an added dimension.

The relationship between Sir Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and Queen Elizabeth is relatively well documented. Hertford came from an ancient, powerful and very ambitious aristocratic family.¹ He was the son of Edward Seymour, Lord Protector Somerset, by his second wife Anne Stanhope. As Somerset had disowned his offspring by his first wife Katherine Filliol, Hertford, as his eldest legitimate son, stood to inherit his father's titles and estates. His aunt was Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife, and thus he was Elizabeth's first cousin by marriage.

¹ According to Antonia Fraser, the family's original Norman name was St. Maur, and a Seigneur Wido de Saint Maur was said to have come to England with the Conquest; in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1992), p. 233.

Hertford's father, Edward Seymour, 'led the normal life of a sixteenth-century courtier who had secured the good opinion of the King, holding various minor offices and amassing a very large number of estates, steadily advancing in the peerage.'² It soon became obvious that Seymour had managed to secure far more than merely the King's good opinion. His unstoppable ascent began following his sister Jane's marriage to Henry VIII, when he was first made Viscount Beauchamp in June 1536, then a Privy Councillor on 22 May 1537. The title Beauchamp had been created for him at his sister's wedding with special remainder 'to his male heirs born thereafter'.³

When, in 1537 Jane gave birth to the long-awaited Prince, Seymour's position improved beyond all expectations. He had wielded great authority as the King's brother-in-law. Now he was also the uncle to the heir to the throne, at a time when the King was past his prime, and thus liable to die before his son reached majority. Such an uncle would have a good claim to act as Regent, either officially, or unofficially in the Queen's name. At Edward's christening on 15 October 1537 both Edward Seymour and his brother Thomas were given important ceremonial roles. Thomas was among the gentlemen of the Privy Chamber who held the canopy over the baby's head. Edward had an even more weighty duty: he carried the Prince's four-year old half-sister Elizabeth.⁴ Three days later, the baby boy was proclaimed Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Carnarvon, and Seymour was created Earl of Hertford, with the same proviso in favour of the sons of his second

² C.R.N. Routh, *Who's Who in Tudor England* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1990; revised edn.), p. 136.

³ George Edward Cokayne, ed., *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols (London: St. Catherine's Press, 1910-; reprinted edn. 1982), VI, p. 504.

⁴ Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, pp. 264, 279.

marriage as before.⁵ The King also granted him lands worth over £600 a year, compared to the £450 a year he had inherited from his father. Thomas Seymour was knighted and received lands in Essex and Hampshire.

The fact that Queen Jane died only twelve days after the birth of her son could have halted the Seymour brothers' careers, but their prospects did not suffer. On the contrary, after the fall of Thomas Cromwell in 1540, Edward Seymour's power in particular increased considerably. In 1542 he was made Lord High Admiral (a post he relinquished almost immediately and which later went to his brother Thomas) and in March 1544, he commanded the troops sent to conquer Scotland. Between 1545 and 1546 he saw military service in France, where he gained a great victory at Boulogne (1545). Seymour's ever-increasing importance was reflected in the fact that, in 1544, he was also appointed Lieutenant of the Kingdom during the King's absence in France and was sent on important diplomatic missions to the Emperor Charles V.

There is insufficient evidence that Edward Seymour caused the fall of the Howard family (Norfolk and his son Surrey), but when the continual jealousies between the Seymours and the Howards came to a head in 1546/47, it was the Howards who suffered and the Seymours who profited. When Henry VIII died on 28 January 1547, Edward Seymour was the most powerful man in the kingdom and he immediately used this position to full advantage. In collusion with the other Privy Councillors, he succeeded in keeping the King's death a secret for two days until he had secured

⁵ Cf. Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors. From AD 1485 to 1559*, ed. William Douglas Hamilton, 2 vols (London: Camden Society, 1875), I, p. 68.

possession of Prince Edward. Some “inconvenient” clauses in Henry’s will were suppressed, while other provisions of the will were doctored by the use of the ‘dry stamp’ (a stamp that did not need the King’s signature). This enabled members of the Privy Council to obtain hugely increased bequests.⁶

Seymour also seized the opportunity of advancing himself and his family. Thus, on 4 February Edward Seymour became the Duke of Somerset, his brother Thomas Baron Seymour of Sudeley on 16 February, a Knight of the Garter and Lord Admiral a day later, having already been made a Privy Councillor in the last days of Henry’s reign. Edward Seymour, who from now on will be referred to as Somerset, then assumed, with the help of his supporters, the title of Protector of the Kingdom. Surprisingly, this was allowed to happen even though Henry had appointed sixteen executors as equal regents for his son.⁷

When his father died, Edward VI was not only a minor but a child of nine years, and for two years Somerset exercised royal authority in all but title. He was conscious of his elevated position and apparently regarded it as rightfully his: in a prayer, he refers to himself as ‘caused by Providence to rule’, and in a letter he addressed the King of France as ‘brother’.⁸

The key to Somerset’s policy, according to M.L. Bush, is to be found in his desire to conquer Scotland, a goal he pursued with ‘obsessive stubbornness’.⁹ The

⁶ Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, p. 394; C.R.N. Routh, *Who’s Who in Tudor England*, p. 137.

⁷ C.R.N. Routh, *Who’s Who in Tudor England*, p. 140.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹ *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset*, (London: Arnold, 1975), p. 48.

Protector, who had been deeply involved in the Scottish campaign before, decided to resolve the problem once and for all and conquer the Scots by establishing a series of fortresses to hold the country in a state of military occupation. In order to finalize the conquest, the infant Mary Stuart was to marry Edward VI. In the event, Somerset did not achieve his objective: the Scots remained independent and sent their young Queen for safe keeping in France, where she was betrothed to the Dauphin.

By 1549, Somerset's foreign policy had failed, and a series of internal rebellions convinced many of his fellow councillors that he was becoming a problem. His position had been shaken already when he had sent his own brother, Thomas, to the block earlier that year. Although the insurrections were successfully suppressed, the entire Privy Council turned against Somerset. In October 1549 he was stripped of all his offices and imprisoned. He was allowed to live until January 1552, when the Duke of Northumberland, who had seized most of the principal offices of state the previous year, felt secure enough to have Somerset tried and executed. Allegedly, Somerset had been plotting against him. Another accusation to be levelled at Somerset later was that he 'plotted' to marry his daughter Jane to Edward VI.¹⁰ It is conceivable that, after the intended match between Edward and Mary of Scotland had fallen through, Somerset wanted to make Edward his son-in-law. This would have ensured the continuance of his influence even after the King came of age. To consolidate his position further, Somerset planned to marry Lady Jane Grey, who was living in his brother's Sudeley household at the time, to his son Edward, the future Earl of Hertford. However, Somerset's brother Thomas successfully blocked

¹⁰ *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI*, ed. W.K. Jordan (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 93.

the match.¹¹ One can only speculate about Somerset's intentions. Was he merely attempting to marry his son highly? Or did he, as Mortimer Levine suggests, consider the possibility of keeping the crown in his own family by attempting to bring about a Suffolk succession in the event of Edward's death without issue?¹²

In political terms, Somerset was a failure. He did not succeed in conquering Scotland, and he squandered what in 1547 had seemed an invulnerable position as Lord Protector within a mere two years. He abused his powerful position to enrich himself, his family, and his supporters. He was executed as a traitor, although it must be remembered that Northumberland had his own agenda in hounding Somerset out of office and having him put to death. Somerset did, however, successfully protect his young nephew's life and attempted to prepare him for his role as King of England. Unlike Northumberland, Somerset never tried to subvert the succession. On the other hand, he apparently had no qualms about manipulating people, policies and documents in order to reach his own objectives. He succeeded in advancing himself, and his family, to (virtually) royal status.

It was into this family that Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, was born. When she became Queen in 1558, history and experience would have suggested to Elizabeth (and her councillors) that Somerset's son was worth watching. The whole family had proved "upwardly mobile" and ambitious in the extreme. Seymour's aunt Jane (who had probably been a pawn in her brothers' ambitious schemes) had become Henry VIII's third Queen and given him the male heir needed to continue the Tudor

¹¹ *Collection of State Papers ... Left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley*, ed. Samuel Haynes and William Murdin (London: John Lane, 1740), p. 80.

¹² *Tudor Dynastic Problems, 1460-1571* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 80.

dynasty. On Henry's death, Seymour's father had seized power and had virtually been King of England for two years. His uncle, Thomas Seymour, first apparently planned to marry Elizabeth herself (following Henry's death in 1547), and when she prudently declined, he chose the next best option. He married Catherine Parr, the Queen Dowager. Until Edward married --not an immediate prospect for a nine-year-old boy-- Catherine would remain the first lady and even take precedence over the King's daughters. We can only speculate about Thomas's motives in marrying Catherine, but her position as the young King's much-loved stepmother as well as her vast wealth must have made her a very attractive proposition.¹³ When Catherine died in 1548, Thomas Seymour renewed his plans for marriage with Elizabeth. As a result of this and other apparently treasonous activities, he was attainted and beheaded in March 1549.¹⁴ Elizabeth found herself implicated and in great danger. She succeeded in extricating herself, but the experience was one she was not likely to forget.

If Hertford was anything like the rest of his family, he himself might well have similar or even higher ambitions, and therefore it seemed advisable to keep a close eye on him. However, the Queen was fair-minded enough not to tar all members of one family with the same brush. There is plenty of evidence for this, but the prime example is Northumberland's son Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who became Elizabeth's trusted lifelong friend, although both his grandfather and father had been executed for high treason (in 1510 and 1549 respectively). Robert's brother

¹³ Henry left her 10,000 pounds' worth of plate and jewels, as much 'apparel' as she wanted to take away, and 'one thousand pounds in money'. On top of this she had her royal jointure, including properties at Hanworth and Chelsea. For details see Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, p. 396.

¹⁴ For an extensive documentation of Thomas Seymour's activities see *Collection of State Papers ... Left by William Cecil*, I, pp. 62-109.

Guilford, who had innocently become involved in his father's political schemes and machinations, had also died a violent death for his marriage to Lady Jane Grey.¹⁵

Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, was born on 25 May 1539, which made him Elizabeth's junior by almost six years and Edward's contemporary.¹⁶ His father's influential position at Court made it possible for him to be educated together with the young Prince, who knighted him at his coronation in February 1547. Edward was not yet ten and Seymour a year younger. Both boys were very young when their fathers died and seem to have been close. Even though his father had been tried and executed for felony in January 1552, Seymour's fortunes did not suffer immediately. He inherited his father's dignities and estates and became *de iure* Duke of Somerset, although he could not take his seat in the House of Lords because he was a minor. However, a year later his father's enemies procured an Act of Parliament 'for the limitation of the late Duke of Somerset's lands', which introduced a clause that declared forfeit all the lands, estates, dignities, and titles of the late duke and his heirs by his second wife.¹⁷ Seymour's relationship with the King remained good, however, and Edward restored some of Seymour's father's estates to the son by letters patent. Having said that, Hertford seems to have been dependent for financial support on Sir John Thynne. Thynne had been taken into the household by Seymour's father and had become his steward and 'confidential man of business'.

As Somerset flourished, so did Thynne, taking full financial advantage of his

¹⁵ Charles Howard, Lord Effingham, provides another example. He was the nephew of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, who conspired with Mary Queen of Scots in an effort to return England to Catholicism. This fact did not impede Effingham's career at all, who was to hold many highly influential offices under Elizabeth.

¹⁶ For a convincing explanation of why Hertford's date of birth is probably 25 May 1539 rather than 12 October 1537, see *DNB*, sub "Seymour".

¹⁷ Acts of Parliament, 5 Edward VI (1553).

position.¹⁸ Although he found himself briefly imprisoned in the Tower in 1549 and again in 1551 for his close connections with Somerset, Thynne survived the Protector's disgrace unscathed and succeeded in holding on to his estates in Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire, besides those he had inherited in Shropshire. He seems to have felt responsible for Hertford and supported him financially.

Hertford's fortunes seemed to have changed at last when, by an act passed in the first Parliament of Mary's reign, he was restored in blood. Almost immediately following Elizabeth's accession, he was granted the lands which his father had inherited and was created both Baron Beauchamp and Earl of Hertford on 13 January 1559. Elizabeth was apparently prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt and ensured that the dignities that were rightfully his were restored to him.

Then Hertford made a crucial mistake. He deflowered a virgin of royal blood, or so the judges who were to annul his marriage declared. Late in 1560 Hertford secretly married Lady Catherine Grey, Elizabeth's cousin once removed (Henry VIII's great-granddaughter and younger sister of the ill-fated Jane Grey). The couple did not ask the Queen's permission, knowing full well that she would probably refuse it. When Catherine became pregnant she had to confess her marriage to Elizabeth, who, by all accounts, was furious at the betrayal. Thus, in 1561 Lady Grey, Hertford and their new-born son found themselves imprisoned in the Tower. Elizabeth had two reasons for her antagonistic reaction: Catherine was a relative as well as one of

¹⁸ Cf. Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 40; see also *DNB*, sub "Thynne".

her maids of honour. The Queen claimed the right to control her maids' marriages, and by an act of 1536, it was treason for a person of royal blood (like Catherine) to marry without the sovereign's consent. Secondly, and far more importantly, the possibility of a legal marriage entered into by Catherine and, consequently, of legal offspring, had very serious implications for Elizabeth herself.

In order to understand the repercussions of Catherine's marriage we need to examine the succession issue. The newly-established Elizabethan regime had to be deeply worried about this subject. Elizabeth's reluctance to comply with the wishes of both her Parliament and Privy Council to marry and produce an heir had become apparent early in the reign. Mortimer Levine has demonstrated the importance of the succession question for Elizabeth's contemporaries who had recently witnessed the rapid demise of two Tudor monarchs.¹⁹ Two strong claimants to the throne were at the core of the succession problem. One was Mary Stuart, who had a strong hereditary right, but was a foreigner and a Catholic. The other contestant was Catherine Grey, whose hereditary claim, although weaker than Mary's, was supported by Henry VIII's will as well as her native birth. Henry's will decreed that, if his children died without issue, the crown should not pass to the Scottish Stuarts (the heirs of his elder sister Margaret), but to the Suffolk line (the issue of his younger sister Mary). Any marriage involving either woman, especially if it were to produce offspring, had to be perceived as a major threat to the stability of the new Elizabethan government.

¹⁹ *The Early Elizabethan Succession Question, 1558-1568* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), particularly pp. 13-29.

Early in 1562 an ecclesiastical commission was appointed which duly declared the marriage between Lady Grey and the Earl of Hertford invalid and their first-born child, Edward, illegitimate. Neither Hertford nor Grey had been able to produce the priest who had performed the ceremony or any documentary evidence to support their claim that they were lawfully married.²⁰ Had Elizabeth accepted the legality of this marriage, she would almost automatically have appointed her successor, something she was loath to do, and succeeded in avoiding until her death. Harsh though the imprisonment in the Tower might have been, the arrangements were sufficiently liberal for the couple to conceive another child. On 10 February 1563 their second son, Thomas, was born in the Tower as well. A further judicial inquiry was held which found that Hertford had compounded his crime of 'having deflowered a virgin of the royal blood in the Queen's house' by having 'ravished her a second time'.²¹ Due to the fact that their parents' marriage was not recognized, both Hertford's sons were not only ineligible to compete for the succession, but neither could inherit his father's titles or property on his death.

After 1563 Hertford never saw his wife again. Following an outbreak of plague in London, both were removed from the Tower in August that year and placed under house arrest with different families. Hertford was first in the custody of his mother and her second husband, Francis Newdigate, at Hanworth, and then committed to the custody of Sir John Mason.²² Catherine died suddenly on 27 January 1568, still a

²⁰ The trial and examinations are recorded in Harl.MS.6286 and analysed in Mortimer Levine, *The Early Elizabethan Succession Question*, pp. 19-28.

²¹ William Camden, *History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth* (London, 1675), pp. 58-9.

²² Cf. Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 23ff.

prisoner.²³ Although his wife's death seems to have improved Hertford's situation somewhat, he remained in easy confinement in various country houses until 1571. The fine imposed by the Star Chamber for his "crime", originally the huge sum of £15,000, but almost immediately reduced by Elizabeth to £5,000, was still being paid off in 1579.

After his release Hertford seems to have kept a low profile, only holding some minor offices. In 1578 he was on the commission for the peace in Wiltshire, and in the following year joint commissioner for musters in the same shire. The year 1580 proved to be another turning-point in Hertford's life. He was given his patrimony and became enormously rich because his father had amassed great estates in the course of his political career. Around the same time he married Lady Frances Howard, the sister of Lord Howard of Effingham, and another of Elizabeth's maids of honour. This time there were no problems. Although the Queen was not very keen for Frances to marry Hertford, she gave her permission and his prospects seemed to improve considerably.²⁴

Significantly, it was also from 1580 that Hertford himself secretly entered in the Court of Arches, year after year, a protest against the finding of the ecclesiastical commission.²⁵ His newly-acquired money and wife apparently gave him the confidence and an incentive to attempt to overturn the verdict preventing his sons from inheriting his titles or estates. Having said that, it was only under James VI that

²³ For an account of her death see Harl.MS.39, fol.380.

²⁴ Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Cape, 1998), p. 261.

²⁵ The Court of Arches was the Archbishop of Canterbury's court that heard appeals from diocesan courts and grew into a court of the first instance.

Hertford's elder son was granted a patent in May 1608 guaranteeing that he and his heirs would be Earls of Hertford after his father's death.²⁶

The succession question played a major part in Hertford's life for well over forty years. His ill-judged, overambitious, marriage to Catherine Grey and the births of their two sons, seen in the context of the contemporary succession debate, caused the Earl to be imprisoned and disgraced. The Elvetham entertainment of 1591, during a period when the resolution of the succession question became ever more pressing, must be viewed in this political context as his final attempt to smooth the way for his sons as potentially viable candidates for the succession. The Earl's willingness to sponsor the exorbitant entertainment, as well as the fact that an account of the event was published within only a week of the Queen's departure, support this interpretation. The primary motive for the publication of the entertainment text must surely have been the unparalleled opportunity it offered for self-advertisement and the promotion of his family's honour in the aftermath of his disastrous first marriage.

When Hertford and Lady Grey first became involved with each other in the early 1560s, the succession was a hotly debated issue, although Elizabeth made it clear that she wished neither her lawyers nor her subjects to discuss this matter publicly, as the French Ambassador reported in 1566:

As for handling the succession, not one of them [her subjects] should do it; she would reserve that for herself. She had no desire to be buried alive, alike her sister. Well she knew how people at that time had flocked to her at Hatfield: she

²⁶ W.P.D. Murphy, ed., *The Earl of Hertford's Lieutenancy Papers, 1603-1612* (Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society 23, 1969); also sub "Seymour" in *DNB*.

wanted no such journeyings in her reign. Nor had she the slightest wish for their counsel on this subject.²⁷

The case of Roger Edwards underlines this interpretation. Edwards wrote a tract entitled *Castra Regis* in 1567/8, opposing the settlement of the succession. When copies of the tract got abroad Edwards was fined £500 and imprisoned in the Tower for fifteen months. Despite the fact that he advocated what was essentially Elizabeth's policy in the matter he was punished severely. The only obvious explanation for this harsh punishment is that the Queen saw Edward's intervention as meddling in affairs that were hers, and exclusively hers, to decide.²⁸

Shortly after the return of Mary Queen of Scots to Scotland in August 1561, her chief adviser William Maitland of Lethington was sent to England to convince the English Queen of the necessity to recognize Mary as next in line to the succession. Although Elizabeth rejected Maitland's proposal, she indicated her preference for Mary over all other candidates.²⁹ This triggered a counter-campaign, beginning with the performance of Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc*, performed by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple before the Queen at Whitehall on 18 January 1562.³⁰ *Gorboduc*, ostensibly a play about the succession problem in mythical Britain, in its fifth act openly alludes to the contemporary situation under Elizabeth. The villain of the piece, a Scot who attempts to seize the crown after the extinction

²⁷ La Fôret to Charles IX, 21 October 1566. This is Sir John Neale's paraphrase of the letter. It is printed in Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1559-81* (London: Cape, 1953), p.136; also quoted in Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies*, p. 11.

²⁸ Example mentioned in John E. Neale, 'Peter Wentworth, Part II', *EHR*, 39 (1924), 185-6.

²⁹ *Queen Mary's Letter to the Duke of Guise*, ed. J.H. Pollen (London: Publications of the Scottish History Society 43, 1904), pp. 38-43.

³⁰ Adwin W. Green, *The Inns of Court and Early English Drama* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), p. 140.

of the royal line, could be easily identified with Mary Stuart by the audience. The preferable and rightful successor, so *Gorboduc* implied, was Catherine Grey:

Right mean I his or hers, upon whose name
The people rest by mean of native line,
Or by the virtue of some former law,
Already made their title to advance.³¹

Catherine both came from a 'native line' and 'a former law', i.e. Henry VIII's will, had decreed her to be the rightful successor. The principal message of the play, however, was the need for an immediate settlement of the succession. If it were not done, civil war would be the inevitable consequence, and England would fall easy prey to foreign powers.

The 1563 Parliament no sooner got under way than it began to discuss the succession. By the end of January a House of Commons committee presented a petition to Elizabeth concerning her marriage and the succession. Thomas Norton headed the commission and probably wrote the petition as well because its arguments are reminiscent to the ones employed in *Gorboduc*. Neither the Commons' petition nor a similar, somewhat weaker one, presented by the Lords, achieved anything, however.³²

Meanwhile, a "pamphlet war" over the succession issue had broken out. John Hales, a radical MP, in a pamphlet defended Catherine Grey's claim and attacked that of Mary Stuart.³³ He maintained that Grey's marriage to Hertford was legitimate by the sole consent of the two parties, and that the title to the crown definitely belonged to

³¹ Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, "*Gorboduc*", in *The Minor Elizabethan Drama*, 2 vols (London: Dent, 1959), I, p. 51.

³² J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1559-1581*, pp. 109-10.

³³ Harl.MS. 550.

the Suffolk line. In 1565 Sir Anthony Browne, a Catholic judge and Viscount Montague's father, provided a manuscript answer to Hales's tract which four years later became the basis for the succession book of Bishop Leslie's more famous defence of Mary Stuart.³⁴ These and all following tracts (five alone between 1565 and 1569) were clearly written with the intention to influence public and parliamentary opinion on the subject. The choice of successor was one between Catherine and Mary Stuart, or so it was presented.

In 1566 both Houses of Parliament were determined to have the succession settled once and for all. Our information about this session derives mainly from reports sent to Spain by Guzman de Silva. Although Spanish Ambassadors were often poorly informed and/or wilfully misinformed, da Silva seems to have been more discerning than most. According to his reports, Parliament was no longer divided over too many claimants. The Commons were 'nearly all heretics and adherents of Catherine Grey'. Mary Stuart had powerful supporters among the lay peers, but the greatest among them, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, had been lured into the Suffolk camp by the prospect of marrying his daughter to one of Catherine's sons.³⁵

Mortimer Levine interprets da Silva's comments thus:

If Norfolk was for Catherine, many moderate peers were probably with him. Add to this the Protestant zealots among the nobles and bishops, whose succession activities would antagonize Elizabeth particularly, and it becomes likely that the majority of the Lords would have gone along with the Commons in a declaration for Catherine.³⁶

In the event, when Parliament was dissolved by the Queen on 2 January 1567 nothing had been accomplished, but Catherine Grey's supporters in particular must

³⁴ Harl.MS. 555, fos. 11-16; John Leslie, *A Defence of the Honour of ... Mary, Queen of Scotland* (London, 1569), pp. 51-119.

³⁵ CSP Span., Elizabeth, I, 385, 387, 390, 396.

³⁶ *Tudor Dynastic Problems*, p. 116.

have regarded the parliamentary session of 1566 more of a delay than a defeat. It seemed merely a matter of time until the Queen, faced with financial difficulties and dependent to a certain extent on Parliament's help to raise funds, would have to give in to public and parliamentary pressure to name an heir.

If Catherine's chances looked good in January 1567, they were soon to improve beyond recognition. By the summer Mary Stuart had lost not only Scotland but practically all her Catholic supporters in England and on the Continent due to the events of the previous months: Darnley's murder under circumstances that suggested Mary's implication; her marriage to the Earl of Boswell who was probably responsible for Darnley's untimely death; the revolt by the Scots against their Queen; Mary's defeat, imprisonment and enforced abdication in favour of her son James who was then only a year old. Mary as a contender for the throne was clearly out of the running and Elizabeth had lost her best excuse for endlessly postponing a settlement.

A year later, however, the situation changed again dramatically. Catherine Grey died on 27 January. Her sons were still illegitimate and thus ineligible for the succession. Her sister Jane had been dead for fourteen years and her younger sister Mary had ruled herself out by making a more than unsuitable marriage. The junior Suffolk line of Lady Mary Strange, Catherine's cousin, was Catholic and therefore unacceptable. Outside the Suffolk line only the puritan Earl of Huntingdon and James VI of Scotland were serious contenders. The English Protestants had no feasible claimant to back, unless, that is, Catherine's sons were to be recognized. For that to happen they had first to be made legitimate.

On the eve of the new Parliament in May 1572 there was a general expectation that the succession question would be dealt with in the forthcoming session. A Spanish agent reported that it was Parliament's purpose to discuss the succession and that it was thought that one of Catherine and Hertford's sons would be chosen.³⁷ This interpretation might well have been correct. In spite of the Queen's long-standing refusal to bring about a settlement, this change of mind, if it had taken place, could be explained against the backdrop of the Ridolfi Plot discovered the year previously, Norfolk's trial for high treason and Elizabeth's more than precarious position.³⁸ If Hertford's sons' claim was indeed to be debated, it would have given him hope that his sons could still "make the running", provided their illegitimacy were to be revoked first and they were to be perceived as worthy successors in every respect. In the event, Elizabeth did not allow Parliament to tackle the succession question, not even to exclude the by now discredited Mary Stuart.³⁹ And the Queen continued to suppress the public debate of the succession issue whenever possible. In 1575/6 the Spanish Ambassador reported that those who had wished to revive the succession debate during that Parliament's session had been silenced, and in 1580/1 the Lord Keeper banned its discussion explicitly in his opening speech.⁴⁰ The fact that the succession was still being debated, albeit not publicly, is reflected in a remark by the German traveller Lupold von Wedel. When he toured England in 1584 he was granted an audience with the Queen. He described one occasion when Elizabeth was dining in state, weaving a good deal of gossip into his correspondence. We are told that the gentleman in attendance on the Queen were

³⁷ CSP Span., Elizabeth, II, 383.

³⁸ CSP Span., Elizabeth, II, 393.

³⁹ Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 429-37.

⁴⁰ CSP Span., Elizabeth, II, 529; III, 81.

Charles Howard, the Lord High Admiral, the Earl of Leicester, Lord Burghley, Christopher Hatton and 'my lord Hertford, who they say of all Englishmen has the most right to the throne'.⁴¹

In the early 1590s therefore the succession problem had not only not been resolved, but it was becoming increasingly acute. When Elizabeth visited Elvetham in September 1591 she was fifty-eight years old, had no heir, and steadfastly refused to name a successor. *Gorboduc* had been reprinted the year previously, reflecting the continuing preoccupation with the issue, and according to references in Henslowe's *Diary* and Dekker's *Satiromastix*, Gorboduc and his two sons had become familiar stage figures by the 1590s.⁴²

The execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587 had solved the acutest succession problem by eliminating the surviving chief contender for the succession. Although there was still a great deal of uncertainty, many people seemed now content to let time work out its own solution. Apparently, Elizabeth had been successful with her policy of postponement. The "cause" was dead, 'unless some leader of outstanding courage and pertinacity would dare to breathe new life into it.'⁴³ Such a leader was the Protestant parliamentarian Peter Wentworth.

Wentworth was jailed in August 1591, immediately prior to the Elvetham entertainment, for pushing a succession settlement. Wentworth, who had hitherto

⁴¹ Victor von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners* (London: John Lane, 1928), p. 322.

⁴² *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 132-4; *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols, ed. Fredson Bowers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), I, *Satiromastix*, I.ii.339-42.

⁴³ J.E. Neale, 'Peter Wentworth', 181-2.

been a champion of free speech, decided to devote himself solely to the succession problem in the 1580s. As early as 1587 the MP had composed a pamphlet entitled *A Pithie Exhortation to her Majestie for Establishing her Succession to the Crowne*, in which he urged the Queen to settle the succession in favour of James Stuart. Echoing his contemporaries' fears, he painted a harrowing picture of what was going to happen to the country should Elizabeth die without a successor. When he failed to present his petition to the Queen he decided to approach Burghley, first personally, and a year later by letter. Burghley was supposed to prevail upon the Queen to settle the succession. However, Burghley repeatedly refused to receive him and answered his letters politely, but noncommittally.⁴⁴ Wentworth was convinced that Elizabeth's chief minister favoured his cause, but that the Queen had determined that 'that question should be suppressed so long as euer she liued'.⁴⁵

Having achieved nothing with Burghley, Wentworth turned to one Dr Moffat who had connections with the Earl of Essex. When Moffat had Wentworth's manuscript copied at a tailor's shop some of the copies got abroad. As a consequence, Wentworth was sent for by the Privy Council and interrogated.⁴⁶ He was imprisoned from August to November 1591, and confined for several more months. Neale suggests that his final release date was on or around 11 February 1592.⁴⁷

Undeterred, Wentworth then made plans to gain support for his petition in the House of Commons during the parliamentary session 1592/93. He discussed the

⁴⁴ CSPD, II, 16, 19.

⁴⁵ *A Pithie Exhortation to her Majestie for Establishing her Succession to the Crown* (London, 1587), 'Discourse', p. 3.

⁴⁶ BM, Harleian MS. 6846, fols. 90, 92.

⁴⁷ 'Peter Wentworth', 185, n.3.

issue with fellow MPs outside Parliament, and when his preparations became known, his case was examined before the Privy Council again. Wentworth's refusal to acknowledge the illegality of his petition, or even to answer some questions, led to his permanent imprisonment in the Tower.

If Elizabeth wanted to suppress the succession debate, she had to repress people such as Wentworth. The parliamentarian refused to abandon his efforts and there was a large section of the House which would presumably have voted for a settlement. Wentworth died at the age of seventy-three in 1596 and his pamphlet was only published posthumously by some friends two years later.

The treatment meted out to Wentworth underlines Neale's conclusion that matters of state like the succession might just be legitimately debated in Parliament, but nothing could shield a member who dared discuss them outside.⁴⁸ The only other "safe" place was the stage, according to Marie Axton: '...the public stage of the 1590s was the freest open forum for political speculation.'⁴⁹ Ironically, Wentworth's case was examined by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. This was the same Thomas Sackville who, in collaboration with Thomas Norton, had written *Gorboduc* thirty years previously. Both Buckhurst and Wentworth were keenly interested in a succession settlement, but they adopted different approaches in order to win over the Queen. Wentworth opted for pamphleteering and was punished severely whilst Buckhurst chose the stage and did not suffer at all. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Earl of Hertford should have chosen a progress entertainment, which provided a form of public stage, as a vehicle to advance his sons' claim to the succession.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 204.

⁴⁹ *The Queen's Two Bodies*, p. 89.

Hertford may have had little reason to love the Queen, but he had more grounds than most to prove his loyalty to her. Indeed “loyalty” and “honour” are prominent values throughout the entertainment. If Hertford was anxious and a man engaged in ‘desperate submission’, as one commentator claims, why would he take potentially dangerous steps to advance himself and his family, thereby appearing to destabilize the Queen’s position and endangering his own?⁵⁰ The answer must be that, in the eyes of the law, his sons Edward and Thomas were bastards. The ecclesiastical commission of 1562 had declared their parents’ marriage null and void and them illegitimate. This decision, however, could be overturned by legal methods. If the Queen were to tolerate, even if not foster, such a legal process, his chances of success would be infinitely greater. If the commission’s decision were overturned, Hertford’s sons stood to inherit his titles, money and estates at worst, and would be able to establish themselves as potentially viable successors at best.

Against the background of the unsettled succession and our knowledge of other progress entertainments such as Cowdray, it becomes very difficult to view the Elvetham entertainment as a spectacle of submission, with Hertford trying to curry favour with an omnipotent Queen. History, it seems, cannot provide the framework to explain the entertainment in the context of mere self-interest. It rather seems that this particular encounter between the Queen and one of her aristocrats represents, similar to the Cowdray entertainment, another highly complex negotiation process.

⁵⁰ Cf. James J. Yoch, ‘Subjecting the Landscape in Pageants and Shakespearean Pastorals’, in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 201.

On closer examination of the entertainment text it becomes clear that Hertford used the event not so much to manipulate the royal figure as to assert his own honour, and therefore the eligibility of his sons, at a time when the succession was unsettled and various competitors were preparing themselves for a potentially bloody struggle over the throne.

VII. THE ELVETHAM ENTERTAINMENT OF SEPTEMBER 1591

Play for a kingdom
(Henry V, III.vi.119)

VII.1 The Entertainment Text

Before we study the event itself we should briefly consider the entertainment text(s).

The Elvetham entertainment has become known through an anonymously published description entitled 'The Honorable Entertainement giuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Eluetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford, 1591'. Three copies of this description in quarto have survived. The copy in the British Library lacks the important woodcut of the artificial lake built especially for Elizabeth's visit, whereas the Cambridge and Lambeth copies include the woodcut.

The most accessible editions of the Elvetham entertainment are Warwick Bond's, included in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, published in 1902, and Jean Wilson's in her book *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*.¹ Wilson reprints her text from John Nichols's *The Progresses and Public Processions of Elizabeth I*, which is based on a lost copy text.² That copy text seems to have been generally fuller than the extant versions, although it omits some passages. It also included a much more detailed woodcut of the lake, along with an accompanying identification of its features.³ Wilson's edition therefore, apart from being the most accessible one by far, has the

¹ R. Warwick Bond, *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1902), I, pp. 404ff; Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), pp. 96-118.

² (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), 3 vols, III, pp. 101-21.

³ A copy of this more detailed woodcut of the lake can be found in Appendix II, illustration 5.

advantage of having been taken from the fuller (lost) copy text, reprinting the more detailed woodcut, as well as supplying the alternative readings of the extant texts in footnotes. The Wilson edition will therefore be used as the basis for the discussion of the entertainment and it is to this edition that all citations will refer.⁴

Unfortunately, all physical evidence of the site of the progress entertainment at Elvetham has disappeared. Nothing at all remains of Hertford's house, and today we find a Victorian building in its place or very near to where the original structure stood. The crescent-shaped lake, too, has gone, although Jean Wilson and (the unrelated) David Wilson made an attempt to trace the outlines of the lake with the help of aerial photography in 1981.⁵ The woodcut of the artificial lake is all the more important, not only because it helps us imagine the water show at Elvetham, but it is also among the most important pieces of evidence in the attempt to recreate the visual impact of such entertainments.

The first description of the entertainment appeared on 1 October 1591, within a mere week of Elizabeth's departure from Elvetham, which suggests that someone was most keen to make the events of the entertainment accessible to a wider (reading) public. The text falls into five distinctive parts: the 'Proeme' which includes an address to 'the gentle reader', and the descriptions of the individual events that took place over the four days that Elizabeth and the Court stayed at Elvetham. The 'Proeme' instructs the reader as to how to read the text. It fills in the background to the entertainment and puts great emphasis on the lengths the Earl of

⁴ References will be to Wilson's edition by page number only, incorporated in the text.

⁵ 'The Site of the Elvetham Entertainment', *Antiquity*, 56 (1982), 46-7; also Plates IIb and III.

Hertford went to in order to convert his small estate into a venue suitable for the reception of the Queen. The narrator claims that it is necessary 'for the readers better understanding of everie part and processe in [his] discourse' to explain the circumstances of the Queen's visit (99). Elvetham House and its surrounding park were relatively small, it being one of the Earl of Hertford's minor houses. It seems that Hertford's friends at Court had tipped him off about the Queen's plan to visit him at his Hampshire home during her progress that year. In reaction to this news, Hertford employed three hundred artificers who were given the task of enlarging his house and erecting a multitude of temporary buildings, on a hillside within the park, 'for the entertainment of Nobles, Gentlemen, and others whatsoever' (100). Between the house and the temporary buildings an artificial, crescent-shaped pond was dug that was to be the centrepiece of the whole entertainment. All this was accomplished 'for the desire [Hertford] had to shew his unfained love, and loyall duetie to her most gracious Highnesse', we are told (99).

On 20 September 1591 the Queen was expected at Elvetham for supper. Hertford and more than two hundred of his men rode to Odiham Park, three miles away, where the Queen and Court had previously been staying. They then escorted her back to his house. On entering the park at Elvetham the Queen was welcomed by a Poet with an oration in Latin. Again it becomes clear that the text was aimed at a broader audience because a translation of the Poet's speech into English was provided for the reader, whereas a translation had not been supplied for the spectators. Towards the end of his speech the Poet introduces six virgins, representing the Hours and the Graces, who removed blocks supposedly laid in the Queen's path by 'Envie'. Singing a song and strewing the way with flowers, they

conducted Elizabeth to Hertford's house. The song establishes a recurring theme of the entertainment. Music was to play a major part and seems to have replaced Elizabeth's favourite pursuit of hunting. Music accompanied every action from the Hours and Graces welcoming the Queen, to the musicians who lamented her departure and prayed for her return on the final day. Not surprisingly therefore, Elizabeth was entertained by a consort of six musicians after supper on her day of arrival.

The second day saw the magnificent water show for which the entertainment has become famous. In the morning the weather was too wet for any shows to take place. After supper, which Elizabeth took with her lords and ladies in the specially built rooms of state, the weather had improved sufficiently for the planned water pageants to be performed. The Queen was seated under a canopy by the artificial lake and watched a show featuring gods and goddesses of the sea, such as Nereus and five Tritons, Neptune, Oceanus, and the sea nymph Neaera, and gods of the woods, such as Sylvanus and his fellow satyrs. Each of the three main characters (Nereus, Sylvanus and Neaera) finally delivered a speech to Elizabeth.

On the third day the Queen was entertained with yet more music. A pastoral love song was performed for her in the morning, and in the afternoon she watched a game of tennis being played. The evening brought 'curious fireworks' on the lake and a 'sumptuous banquet' (114).

On the fourth and final day the shows offered to the Queen consisted of a dance by the 'Fayery Queene' and her 'maides', the Fairy Queen's speech, and the fairies' song. Elizabeth then made preparations to leave. All previous characters had

gathered for her departure to express their great sorrow that she had decided to leave. The Poet made a farewell speech and the Queen left whilst a song was being performed by some musicians hidden in a bower.

On the surface, the entertainment seems to have been a resounding success, or so the reader is led to believe. The narrator notes that, on her departure, Elizabeth was so pleased with the whole entertainment that she vowed she would not forget it. The alternative version reads similarly but goes even further, claiming that the Queen promised that ‘hereafter hee [i.e. Hertford] should finde the rewarde thererof in her especiall favour’ (166, n.109).

But what exactly did have Elizabeth in mind when she referred to her ‘especiall favour’ and what was the Earl hoping for as a reward? Was Hertford simply trying to make amends for his unfortunate first marriage? Was he attempting to display his loyalty to the Queen, although his past and family history may well have made him somewhat suspect from Elizabeth’s point of view? Or was he campaigning on his sons’ behalf, hoping that the Queen would have their illegitimate status revoked and thus recognize them as her successors? In order to find answers these questions we have to examine the entertainment and its aftermath in detail.

VII.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ENTERTAINMENT

Elvetham, together with *The Princely Pleasures* at Kenilworth, was the most spectacular and costly entertainment ever presented before Elizabeth during one of her progresses. Although the Earl of Hertford and the Queen were related, the

entertainment lacks the personal qualities of some visits, like the ones to the Russell family at Bisham and to the Norrises, both in 1592, or any of the many occasions when she visited Burghley at Theobalds.⁶ This is understandable because, due to Hertford's background, Elizabeth must have been somewhat wary of him.

As we have seen, the Earl was in a very good position to bid for the succession. It was imperative, therefore, that he devise an entertainment that would simultaneously please the Queen and deflect suspicions concerning his motives. Most importantly, the entertainment had to express, as well as augment, his family's magnificence, dignity and honour first and foremost in the eyes of the Queen and among his peers, but also among the general public.

It was not unusual to make use of plays and masques for political ends. According to ambassadors of foreign powers, it had been Burghley's policy from the beginning of the reign to use the stage as a political instrument, and a hidden political meaning was suspected in every drama. As early as 1559 the Spanish Ambassador reported that Burghley went so far as to give certain players 'arguments to construct these comedies' [against King Philip], and that the Queen had 'partly admitted' the fact. Similarly, in 1592 the Spanish agent Verstegan wrote that it was 'English policy' to make Philip 'odious unto the people, and to that end certain players were suffered to scoff and jest at him upon their common stages'.⁷

Hertford himself had almost certainly employed drama for political ends before. As we have seen, the play *Gorboduc* can be read as propaganda supporting the

⁶ J. Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions*, III, pp. 241-5.

⁷ Quoted in Edith Rickert, 'Political Propaganda and Satire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *MP*, 21 (1923/4), 133, 138.

succession claims of Catherine Grey and her sons. Hertford had close connections with both authors: Thomas Sackville was almost certainly his friend, and Thomas Norton, as the Duke of Somerset's secretary and schoolmaster, had been his tutor when he was a boy. The play was first performed by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple on 18 January 1562. This was four months after the birth of the Suffolk heir and two weeks before the appointment of the ecclesiastical commission that was to bastardize Hertford's elder son. In 1565 *Gorboduc* was printed and thus became available to the reading public, such as it was. Simultaneously, the Parliament of 1565/66 constituted probably the most determined effort to pressurize the Queen into appointing a successor. The chairman of the committee who presented Parliament's petition to Elizabeth was Thomas Norton. In 1570 Elizabeth was excommunicated by the Pope, and *Gorboduc* was reprinted. The play was reprinted once again in 1590, a year before the Elvetham entertainment was staged. Can all this be merely coincidental? I would suggest that it rather looks like a concerted effort to convince Elizabeth, one way or the other, that Hertford's son(s) had a legitimate claim to the succession, and that they should be considered, if not actually named as heirs apparent.

Elvetham was second to Kenilworth only in its splendour, but all the more impressive because of the severe limitations inherent in its location. While Kenilworth Castle was probably the finest manor in the realm, due to the money and effort that the Earl of Leicester had lavished upon it over many years, Elvetham was comparatively tiny and insignificant: 'Elvetham House being scituate in a parke but of two miles in compasse or thereabouts, and of no great receipt, as being none of

the Earle's chiefe mansion houses' (99). Thus, Hertford had to improvise, both geographically and poetically.

According to the 'Proeme', Hertford had heard a rumour, and more probably he had been tipped off by friends at Court, that Elizabeth had the intention of visiting him at his Hampshire home. Since he was aware that his house was neither large nor magnificent enough to welcome the Queen and her entourage he had numerous temporary buildings erected and a large artificial lake 'cut to the perfect figure of a half moon' dug (100). The construction of the lake was no doubt Hertford's masterpiece, something not to be surpassed. It was sizable enough to have three artificial islands and a pinnacle on it. The crescent-shape lake seems to have been intended as an manifest allusion to the Virgin Queen, in her mythical role as Diana, goddess of the moon. The water pageant of the second day, which will be discussed in detail later, was almost certainly inspired by some devices then fashionable in France and Italy.⁸

The Elvetham water show also presents interesting anticipations of later developments of the masque, as Jean Wilson has pointed out: 'Sylvanus and his followers are more in the nature of an anti-masque than of the equal disputants in a matter, such as are Therion and the foresters in Sidney's *The Lady of May*'.⁹ The structure of the aquatic show, with the defeat of Sylvanus preceding the arrival of Neaera in her pinnacle, is clearly that of a Jonsonian/Jonesian masque and is can be seen, for example, in the suppression of the Satyrs before the arrival of Oberon, or

⁸ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1660*, 3 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), II, pt.1, pp. 345-8.

⁹ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 98.

the driving out of the perversions of love before the arrival of the king in *Love's Triumph though Callipolis*.¹⁰ In this episode playful fighting has taken the place of dancing and Sylvanus being thrown into the lake by Nereus to be ducked by the sea gods shows that farce had a place in this outdoor masque.¹¹

The celebrations offered to the Queen during the Elvetham entertainment are represented as organically related to the countryside. The gods that welcome her are gods of the sea and forest, and the songs performed are pastoral in nature. The music begging her to return is hidden in a bush, thus cunningly suggesting that nature itself is lamenting her departure. The Hours and the Graces are also goddesses closely associated with the natural world. The only notable exception is the Poet. He provides the framework for the entertainment, greeting her on her arrival and elegizing her departure.

The Earl of Hertford spared neither trouble nor expense in mounting his entertainment. He hired three hundred workmen to enlarge his house, dig the artificial lake, and erect what amounted to a village of temporary buildings for the Court. He paid for musicians, poets, dancers, and actors, provided tons of ordnance and fireworks, and supplied expensive stage properties such as Elizabeth's chair of state. He also purchased expensive presents for the Queen. It becomes clear very early on in the entertainment that Hertford was hoping to outdo the splendours of Kenilworth. His main objective must surely have been to impress the Queen with an extraordinary display of wealth and power, thus convincing her that his sons were

¹⁰ Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of Berkeley Press, 1973), I, pp. 405ff.

¹¹ On the "outdoor masque" at Elvetham see Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline* (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1963), pp. 216-7.

suitable successors. The Earl's pageant might also be read as a warning to Elizabeth that his family could and would not be ignored when it came to settling the succession. Like Viscount Montague, he was very powerful, probably even more so, and decided to display this power before the Queen.

VII.3 THE ENTERTAINMENT AS AN EVENT

Although the Elvetham fete is one of the best known progress entertainments, investigations into the event are surprisingly sparse. What criticism exists interprets the pageant almost universally as a gesture of total submission on the Earl of Hertford's part. It is suggested that Hertford had realized his mistake in marrying Catherine Grey and was attempting to win back Elizabeth's favour through an unprecedented spectacle. James Yoch, for example, speaks of Hertford's 'desperate submission', and of 'an attempt to convince [the Queen] of the earl's devotion'.¹ But conventional court flattery and rhetoric, if this is what the pageant was, should never be mistaken for actual devotion, or even submission. Lucille Valentino comes to the conclusion that the Queen's visit signalled Hertford's 'return to favour'. She claims that Elizabeth thus 'set the seal on his forgiveness' while Hertford 'was anxious to present a splendid entertainment and allow the unfortunate past to be obscured by the brilliance of his present offering.'²

Even Christopher Haigh makes an assertion about Elizabeth's behaviour that seems questionable in this context: '... the favour of her company could demonstrate political rehabilitation: an old grudge had been forgotten, and a personal relationship re-established.'³ Machiavelli would have pointed out that old grudges are never forgotten, never forgiven: 'Whoever believes that with great men new services wipe

¹ 'Subjecting the Landscape in Pageants and Shakespearean Pastorals', in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 194-219, 201, 202.

² 'Playing for Power: The Meanings of Elizabethan Entertainments', PhD thesis, Wayne State University, Minnesota (1983), pp. 1, 4.

³ *Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 58.

out old injuries deceives himself.”⁴ Philippa Berry, in her book on Elizabethan iconography, also takes a simplistic line when she remarks on the subject of entertainments that

...several of these events were sponsored by courtiers such as the earl of Hertford at Elvetham in 1591 and lord Montague at Cowdray in 1592, who were using the event to restore themselves to the queen’s favour rather than make any coherent political statement.⁵

In the discussion of the Cowdray entertainment I have attempted to show that Montague was making very much of a political statement. Hertford, too, was attempting to achieve far more than merely to win back the Queen’s favour, as shall be shown hereafter. These interpretations are too simple. They accept the entertainments and their devices at face value, although we know that at the Elizabethan court things were rarely what they seemed at first glance, whether it be iconography or rhetoric. It can even be argued that Hertford had no intention of obscuring the past through present delights, but that, on the contrary, he deliberately evoked the past –and with it his “crime” of marrying Catherine Grey– to rewrite it through his entertainment, as Curtis Breight has suggested.⁶

The key question in the analysis of the pageant must be “Who benefits from its performance and the subsequent publication of the entertainment text?” In attempting to answer this question it is less important to elucidate individual topical references than to isolate significant threads and combine these in a coherent interpretation of the published text(s). The water show enacted on the second day

⁴ *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 61.

⁵ *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London/New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 106-7.

⁶ Curtis C. Breight, ‘Realpolitik and Elizabethan Ceremony: The Earl of Hertford’s Entertainment of Elizabeth at Elvetham, 1591’, *RenQ*, 45 (1992), 25.

clearly features topical references to the current war with Spain, as Harry Boyle in particular has shown; however, they do not dominate the text to such an extent that we should concentrate on them exclusively.⁷ The two threads to be followed here are firstly, the large-scale display of Hertford's wealth, power and honour in an attempt to "prove" his family's eligibility for the succession; secondly, the recasting of Elizabeth in the somewhat unusual role of a goddess inciting desire and favouring procreation in an attempt to rewrite, or put a different interpretation on, the Hertford/Grey family history.

VIII.3.1 The Hertford Family – Suitable Candidates for the Succession

It is obvious that the Earl of Hertford was concerned with the publication of his entertainment. Three separate editions of the text of the Elvetham entertainment are extant. This suggests either that someone, most probably Hertford, wanted the entertainment published or that there existed some "public interest" in this particular event. Both interpretations are credible. For Hertford, the entertainment constituted the unique chance to display his wealth and power to a great many people while simultaneously staking a claim to the throne. In view of the fact that the succession was still unsettled and that the Earl and his heirs had a pivotal role in the debate, there must also have been a great deal of public interest in his entertainment of the Queen. The fact that the text(s) were published within a mere week of Elizabeth's departure supports this interpretation.

⁷ 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham: War Policy in Pageantry', *Studies in Philology*, 68 (1971), 146-66.

The narrative opening of the entertainment reveals Hertford's ceremonial strategy:

... [about three of the clocke his Honour seeing all his Retinew well mounted and ready to attend his pleasure ... in few words, but well couched to the purpose], he put them in minde, what quietnes, and what diligence, or other duetie, they were to use at that present: that their service might first work her Majestie's content, and thereby his honor; and lastly, their own credit; with the increase of his love and favour towards them. This done, my Lord with his traine well mounted, to the number of two hundred and upwardes, [amounting to the number of 3. hundred] and most of them wearing chains of golde about their neckes, he rode towards Odiham. (101-2) ⁸

'Retinew' is the key word here. It refers to the medieval feudal practice of gathering one's followers as some form of private army or bodyguard. In a time when power was constituted more by men than by money, the number of retainers indicated an aristocrat's power or pretensions to power. While in the 14th century retainers were usually called on for fighting services only, in the 15th century they tended to be brought in to supplement the regular household when the lord wished to make a show of state and power. Naturally, the Crown was suspicious of a system which encouraged its subjects to build up great connections and strong power bases with comparatively little outlay. Thus, in 1468 Edward IV made retaining illegal, but in 1504 the Crown modified the Act in that it assumed the right to grant exemption from the law to named individuals, usually for a stated number of retainers.⁹ According to Richard McCoy, Elizabeth permitted the Duke of Norfolk (who was executed for treason in 1572) 'to retain a hundred men in his service, ...notwithstanding the Act against Retainers, and he was escorted to and from

⁸ Significant variations between the different texts will be denoted by square brackets. These variations tend to be expansions of the quotation in question; rarely are they to be read as a replacement.

⁹ Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1978), chp. 2.

London by a “worthy company”, making his passage through the city into a kind of formal progress’.

If Hertford’s two hundred plus men constituted an infringement of the Act against Retainers, the text’s reference to their good service as an enhancement of his ‘honor’ militates against another supposedly royal prerogative. As McCoy states, most Renaissance commentators asserted that only the monarch could confer honour. In this case the conferral seems to be more complex. The men’s good service is required to accomplish ‘her Majestie’s content’, and thus becomes an intermediary in the project to advance Hertford’s honour, to bind him closer to his men.¹⁰

The thrust of Curtis Bright’s recent interpretation of the Elvetham entertainment is based on the ‘decentralization’ of Elizabeth implied in the passage quoted above. The Queen ‘seems to be the focus of the entertainment, but in the transferral from the event to the text she is displaced by Hertford’s desire for self-aggrandizement’.¹¹ This interpretation makes a great deal of sense when we look at the evidence. As mentioned before, the entertainment text was published within a week of Elizabeth’s departure from Elvetham. Hertford was obviously very concerned to make the entertainment accessible to as wide an audience as possible, as quickly as possible. His coat of arms decorated the title page and thus immediately became the focal point: this entertainment was as much about himself and his family as the

¹⁰ Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 19, 12-13; also p. 91.

¹¹ ‘Realpolitik’, 20-48.

Queen. The event itself shows that Hertford's country welcome was unmistakably intended as an expression of his power and status.

In 1591, Hertford was in a position to field a small army and he was flaunting the fact. He was able to mobilize up to three hundred mounted men to greet the Queen, and assemble another three hundred 'artificers' at fairly short notice. Lawrence Stone informs us that already by 1583, 'the Earl of Hertford was using the old system of retaining' and implies that the Earl had been concerned to secure a force loyal to himself and his family for some time.¹²

The main reason why Elizabeth vehemently opposed the extensive conferral of knighthood in the field, as practised by the Earl of Essex in the campaigns of the 1590s, was not only the fact that this cheapened the knightly status, but it had the effect of binding commander and soldier closer together, which could be potentially dangerous to the monarch. Hertford's practice of retaining must have had a similar aim. Bright points out that '[Hertford's] militant gesture at the outset of the entertainment ... is not a threat but an oblique indication that he could not be attacked with impunity, as well as a tangible realization of his powerful status intended to impress all observers and readers, not merely the Elizabethan court.'¹³

The Cowdray entertainment has shown that on these occasions subtle ways of exercising power were employed, as well as means that were not quite so delicate.

We earlier speculated that the Queen might have chosen to arrive at Cowdray on a Saturday evening, in time to prevent mass being celebrated, and that this was

¹² *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 104.

¹³ 'Realpolitik', 36.

intended as an expression of power on her part. One could equally speculate that the Queen's decision to visit Hertford at Elvetham of all places, a minor house, hardly bigger than a hunting box, sprang from the desire to make him appear insignificant. If that had been the intention, the attempt backfired. The inherent disadvantages of the location were ceremonially countered not only by the forceful greeting but also, and more importantly, by the aura of potency and wealth that imbued the whole event.

Hertford was only too aware that power has always been associated with luxury. Therefore a twofold strategy, mutually reinforcing and intertwined, was employed to express his power and wealth, which had to become inseparable to the eye of the spectator and in the reader's imagination. Certain narrative comments seem casual or apologetic, but really function to promote Hertford's prestige:

Were it not that I would not seem to flatter the honorable minded Earle; or, but that I feare to displease him, who rather desired to express his loyal duetie in his liberall bountie, then to heare of it againe, I could heere willingly particulate the store of his cheare and provisions, as likewise the carefull and kind diligence of his servantes, expressed in their quiet service to her Majestie and Nobilitie, and by their loving entertainment to all other friends or strangers. But I leave the bountie of the one, and the industrie of the others, to the just report of such as beheld or tasted the plentifull abundance of that time and place. (107)

The final sentence reveals a great deal about Hertford's approach. 'Bounty' and 'plentifull abundance', as reflected in the elaborate displays and obvious luxury of the entertainment, were to play a major part throughout. All comers, independent of rank or standing, were served and honoured as guests, and thus courted from day one. This set the tone of the whole pageant. Hertford made a bid for the common people's favour, and was trying to impress them at the same time. This was also done with the idea in mind that the actual audience of the entertainment would no

doubt circulate reports about it. The Earl certainly made sure that a notion of his wealth and magnificence would not be lost on the Queen and those members of the Court who were present at the occasion.

Before the entertainment could be mounted Hertford ensured that his country estate would form as perfect a stage as possible, on which to act out the rituals of power.¹⁴ The Earl went to extraordinary lengths when he had a multitude of temporary buildings erected and an artificial lake dug, and it is this unprecedented effort which makes the entertainment so memorable and widely known to this day. The narrative passage introducing the entertainment text describes the new buildings in some detail: they were made from canvas and timber and set up on a hillside in Elvetham park at a short distance from the house. Their outside walls were covered with branches and clusters of hazelnuts, the roof in ivy, while the interior walls were decorated with tapestries and the floor strewn with herbs and sweet-smelling rushes. This description sounds remarkably Spenserian, and on the last day of the entertainment the 'Fayery Quene' herself turned out to do homage to her real-life counterpart.¹⁵

A great hall for the use of knights, ladies and gentlemen of the Court was also set up, as well as a guardroom, accommodation for the Queen's footmen and all the

¹⁴ On the country estate as a the theatre/scenery within which rituals of local power were enacted see Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 141.

¹⁵ The first three books of Spenser's *Fairie Queene* had been published in 1590. R. Warwick Bond demonstrates that at least two writers collaborated on the text of the Cowdray entertainment; cf. *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), I, pp. 522-5. Harry Boyle identifies at least three collaborators; cf. 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham', 160ff.

services rooms required to keep such a mass of people fed (99-101). Unlike the Montagues, Hertford and his family did not vacate their house --which presumably would not have been big enough in any case-- to make room for the Queen and her entourage, but instead opted to have the state rooms and withdrawing chamber required for Elizabeth's personal use specially constructed.

Between this "exhibition architecture" and the Earl's house a crescent-shaped lake was dug, which was no doubt Hertford's masterstroke. The lake was big enough to contain three artificial islands: one in the form of a ship measuring 100 feet by 64 feet, which had three trees for masts; one in the form of a fort, 20 feet square; and a 'Snail Mount' which was 40 feet across at its base, and rose to 20 feet in the middle, consisting of four circles of privet hedge.¹⁶ Between these islands various boats were moored which were intended to hold musicians. Among them was a pinnacle with masts, rigging, sails, brightly coloured flags and pennants that was to be used in the pageant of the second day. The temporary buildings, and even more the magnificent lake with its islands must surely have made an impact on everybody who first laid eyes on them. For Elizabeth, they were the first impression of the Hertford estate, and the extraordinary preparations and effort on her host's part cannot have escaped her. Before the Queen had a chance to see and appreciate these, however, Hertford met her with a grand "welcoming committee" that was to escort her to his house.

Elizabeth was expected on Monday, 20 September for supper. After lunch Hertford, accompanied by between two and three hundred of his men, rode out to meet the

¹⁶ A similar construction can be seen in the gardens of Packwood House, in Warwickshire.

Queen as she came from Odiham, three miles from Elvetham. The sheer number of people on horseback must have been an impressive sight to everybody who witnessed it, not least the people in the neighbourhood. The whole spectacle was obviously calculated to display and enhance Hertford's power. Unlike at Cowdray, where the Queen's vast train had been met by a solitary porter, Hertford's initial greeting at Elvetham formed part of a militant aristocratic tradition:

The riding household clattering in splendour round its lord had undertones of violence, but on other occasions it fulfilled the third function of the household. It clothed [the lord's] power in the mystique of pomp and ritual.¹⁷

We are told that most of the men accompanying Hertford were wearing gold chains. Such a chain, was a favourite symbol of service in a great, often royal, household. It indicated both the allegiance of the wearer and the wealth of the "employer" who had presented it to the wearer. Elizabeth herself liked to give miniatures to a few chosen courtiers as a sign of her appreciation and affection. Before they set out the Earl had gathered his followers around him and made a speech, impressing on his men how important this visit by the monarch was not only to himself, but to all of them. He spelt out what was usually implicit on these occasions: if the entertainment were a success, his honour would be enhanced, and they themselves would ultimately benefit from 'the increase of his love and favour towards them' if they "performed" (101-2).

Not only did Hertford make extraordinary preparations for the entertainment, but he also made lavish presents to the Queen during her sojourn. On the first morning of her stay Elizabeth received a 'faire and rich gift from the Countesse of Hertforde,

¹⁷ M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 22.

which greatly pleased and contented hir Highnesse' (107). Unfortunately, the nature of this gift is not specified. But Hertford's generosity did not stop there. Later that day, the Queen received three more presents. During the water show Nereus handed over a jewel, probably made of gold, on Hertford's behalf (109)¹⁸, Sylvanus presented Elizabeth with an escutcheon, engraved with gold characters (111), supposedly on behalf of Apollo, and Neaera gave her a fan-shaped jewel immediately prior to her short speech (112). The giving of a valuable present was customary on these occasions, and Elizabeth would no doubt have expected it. However, being given four gifts in one day, three of them during the same show, literally within minutes of each other, would no doubt have left the impression that Hertford was, and wanted to be perceived as, most generous and wealthy.

On Wednesday evening after supper a sumptuous banquet was held in the lower gallery of the garden. This took place against the backdrop of a magnificent fireworks display from the three islands in the lake. Once again the Earl of Hertford made full use of the number of retainers at his disposal in a display clearly designed to impress:

... there was a banket served, all in glasse and silver, into the lowe Gallerie in the garden, from a hill side foureteen score off [i.e. about 270 metres], by two hundred of my Lord of Hertforde's gentlemen, everie one carrying so many dishes, that the whole number amounted to a thousand: and there were to light them in their way a hundred torch-bearers. (115)

It does not take extraordinary powers of imagination to picture what a dazzling spectacle that must have been. This was a banquet designed for a royal personage as well as on a royal scale. During the 1575 Kenilworth entertainment, which had

¹⁸ Nereus's present comes from 'gould breasted India'. 'India' presumably stands for the New World, and the present would be therefore made of gold.

become the yardstick for all subsequent welcomes, three hundred dishes had been served at an ‘ambrosial banquet’.¹⁹ Even on the occasions when the Queen dined at Court her meals were not usually on so grand a scale. A foreign visitor who in December 1584 had the opportunity to observe Elizabeth dine in state reports that she was served from forty dishes, all of silver-gilt.²⁰ While Leicester’s banquet was certainly an impressive effort, Hertford’s was clearly designed to top it. The magnificence shown by Hertford clearly demonstrated his claim to dominance in the social hierarchy, and his household provided the ideal stage on which to assert this commanding position.²¹ This and other ostentatious displays were primarily designed to impress the Queen and Court, but would have the additional benefit of influencing Hertford’s neighbours and the members of his household at the same time.

Among the culinary creations served at the banquet were ‘Her Maiesties Armes in sugar-worke. The seuerall Armes of all our Nobilitie in sugar-worke’, exotic and mythical animals such as lions, tigers, elephants, and unicorns, different sorts of birds and fishes, mermaids and dolphins. All of these were crafted in sugar (165, n.95).²² It was well known that Elizabeth had a sweet tooth. Therefore she probably ate some sweets, and would presumably have eaten her own arms. It would have been indecorous to allow anybody else to partake of the royal arms. The banqueters could not have known that the printed account of the entertainment would not only

¹⁹ *Robert Laneham’s Letter*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907), p. 32.

²⁰ Victor von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners* (London: John Lane, 1928), pp. 353-6.

²¹ On the concept of magnificence see F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 7 ff.

²² For a full list of the sugary creations see Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), p. 165, n.95.

feature a woodcut of the lake, but also the Earl of Hertford's arms as the central device on the title page. This permanent and bold device countered the transient nature of the artifacts made of sugar. The Elizabethans were much more used to, and adept at, reading symbols and gestures than we are. Unfortunately, modern editions often fail to produce the title pages of these entertainments, although very often they are important signifiers. The contemporary reader would not have missed the claim that Hertford's arms made to centrality.

Another way of displaying and emphasizing his wealth and power, and to establish his family's credentials as potential successors to the throne, was for Hertford to make the whole event as public as possible. Not only did he have the entertainment text published shortly after the event, but the entertainment itself was a semi-public affair. The extensive preparations for the Queen's visit would not have gone unnoticed among the local populace, many of whom were probably in the Earl's service, and many drafted in additionally to help with the building work. Hospitality was to play a great part in the event. Thus we are also told in the 'Proeme' that the temporary buildings were erected 'for entertainment of Nobles, Gentlemen, and others whatsoever', and a great kitchen was built, 'with a long range, for the waste, to serve all commers' (100). This last reference (to the 'waste') indicates that food that was not consumed by members of the Court or their servants was handed out to whoever wanted it.²³ The impression being created here is that of a host generous and liberal towards great and small alike.

²³ Cf. M. Girouard, *The English Country House*, p. 12.

Hertford displayed his wealth, power and magnificence for all to see. He ensured that those who had not witnessed the entertainment could read about it or would be told about it. If the Earl was intending to stake a claim to the succession on his sons' behalf, it was vitally important that he do everything with the appropriate ceremony, and thus show that his family did not only have the money but also the necessary breeding to be considered worthy successors. After having been met at Odiham and escorted back to Elvetham in style, the Queen was greeted by a Poet with a fine Latin speech. Then six virgins, representing the Hours and the Graces, accompanied Elizabeth to the house, strewing flowers in her path whilst performing a song (106). When the Queen reached the house she dismounted and was greeted by the 'Countesse of Hertford, accompanied with divers honourable Ladies and Gentlewomen'. On a smaller scale, Lady Hertford mimicked her husband's earlier grand welcome of the Queen. Unlike Viscount Montague, who had been conspicuous by his absence, Hertford made sure he was standing 'hard by' when his wife Frances received the Queen. Elizabeth seemed genuinely pleased to see her former favourite maid of honour, 'most graciously imbracing her, tooke hir up, and kissed her', and Hertford was content to bask in the warmth of the reunion (106).

For the second day's water show a lavish canopy of state, made of green satin, silk and silver lace that was supported by four silver pillars, was put up by the lake for the Queen to sit under and watch the pageant. Once again, it was made obvious that the Earl had spared no expenses to create the perfect set. Canopies were originally intended to protect distinguished personages from the sun or rain. They developed into ceremonial stage properties and, eventually, served as an indicator of high rank:

‘... the person beneath it was easily recognized as the focal point of the ceremony.’²⁴

In view of the fact that the morning had been ‘so wet and stormie, that nothing of pleasure could bee presented to her Majestie’ (107) putting up a canopy for the afternoon performance was a sensible precaution on a purely practical level. Hertford was also aware, however, that the provision of such a magnificent canopy for Elizabeth to sit under was the suitable treatment for a monarch and would be expected. The Earl seems determined not to put a foot wrong on this occasion.

Throughout the entertainment, all the characters from Lady Hertford downwards showed themselves subservient, giving Elizabeth presents and paying her effusive compliments. Hertford arranged for exquisite music to be played, pastoral songs to be sung and dances to be performed for the Queen, sure in the knowledge that she loved all of these. The music, allegoric addresses, and the Poet’s Latin speech in particular appealed to the educated members of the audience, chief among them the Queen herself. However, by providing a translation for the Poet’s speech in the published text as well as by including farcical, slapstick elements in the second day’s water show, such as the character of India somersaulting into the water and Sylvanus being ducked by the sea gods, the entertainment would appeal to simpler tastes as well. Hertford was acutely aware of the multiple audiences for his entertainment and the opportunities this offered, and he tried to cater for these audiences. Even if complex devices and Latin verses were largely incomprehensible and speeches inaudible to the common people present, the visual and aural elements of the individual shows could be easily understood. There were dances, fireworks, and a playful skirmish between the gods of the sea and those of the woods, ‘the one

²⁴ Sidney Anglo, ‘Image-making: The Means and the Limitations’, in *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. John Guy (London/New York: Arnold, 1997), p. 28.

side throwing their darts, and the other using their squirtes, and the tritons sounding a pointe of warre' (112).

When the Queen arrived gracious words and gestures were exchanged 'to the great rejoysing of manie beholders' (106). These were presumably not only members of the Hertford household but local people as well. We know that at least some of the shows were open to the public because we are told that 'Sylvanus, being so ugly [a remark that probably refers to his grotesque costume], and running towards the bower at the end of the Pound, affrighted a number of countrey people, that they ran from him for feare, and thereby moved great laughter' (112). The more educated members of the audience were obviously amused by the simplicity of the country people, but this comment is much more important as a piece of evidence that the people from the neighbourhood had access certainly to this, the most spectacular of all shows. Surely this cannot have been a coincidence. The common people were meant to be there as an audience.

Once again it becomes clear that entertainments are complex events that functioned on several levels. The Queen watched a pageant, and was being watched watching it. As in the masques of the Jacobean and Caroline reigns, the monarch is simultaneously part of the audience and part of the cast. In this show, it is the common people who are supposedly just spectators that become the actors for a moment. It is imaginable that in a pageant that was so extremely well planned and executed some of the country people fleeing from Sylvanus were a "plant". They would have been told what would happen and what they were to do. Their reaction would create a funny diversion and would be memorable.

This episode is comparable to the one at Cowdray when on one occasion (at least) the common people from the neighbourhood were invited to perform before the Queen. However, unlike Viscount Montague, who had openly sided with the locals by joining in their dance, thus emphasizing his close relationship with them, Hertford decided to stay with the Court. Like the Earl of Leicester in the Kenilworth entertainment of 1575, he invited the common people to witness his magnificence under the pretence of providing an opportunity to do homage to their Queen for the locals as well as creating a rustic-comic diversion for the courtiers. Both Leicester and Hertford underlined that they definitely belonged with the Court, which is not surprising since Leicester was attempting to win the Queen's hand in marriage, and Hertford was hoping to push his sons' claim to the succession.

By having so many guests and onlookers and in proving such a generous host to all of them, be they courtiers or ordinary country folk, Hertford made sure that his entertainment would not be forgotten in a hurry. Word of mouth, if employed cleverly, is at least as effective as a means of propaganda as is a printed text, if not more so. As a story is told again and again, people will add minor details to make it even more exciting, and to make their own part in it even more important. Late Elizabethan culture still being very much an oral one, with printed matter only slowly replacing the oral tradition, Hertford made assurance double sure by arranging that the courtiers, as well as the Hampshire locals who attended the occasion, would talk about his entertainment for a long time to come. For those who had not been there but could read, he had the account of the event published. The

text was printed by one John Wolfe in London and sold at 'the Little Shop over against the Great South Dore of Paules'.²⁵

The entertainment must have cost Hertford an enormous amount of money.²⁶ To use theatrical terminology, the set (Elvetham Park and its transformation for the royal visit), properties (the various presents and canopy), costumes and accessories (for his mounted household and the various actors) would not have come cheap. Whereas the Cowdray entertainment had a very small cast, players probably doubling wherever they could, the pageant at Elvetham required many actors. The water show featured only three main characters, but dozens of extras were also needed. Hertford seems to have brought in some musicians specifically for the occasion and his hospitality was extended to everybody who cared to turn up.

Some very unusual, and therefore memorable, touches were added as well. Among them, the major metamorphosis of Elvetham Park is certainly the most ostentatious one. It was common to have one's house enlarged or garden rearranged for a royal visit, but the alterations to Hertford's estate were on an unprecedented scale.²⁷ The water show on the artificial lake was unique in terms of the set as well as the pageant itself.²⁸ On the third day Elizabeth was entertained by a game of 'bord and

²⁵ John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), III, p. 101.

²⁶ I have not been able to ascertain the exact amount because the bills for the entertainment are not preserved, unlike for the Harefield entertainment in 1602.

²⁷ Christopher Hatton built a mansion at Holdenby (Northants.), which became the greatest house in the country after Hampton Court, in the hope of a visit from Elizabeth.

²⁸ There is no evidence that the 'three Virgins' in a pinnace playing Scottish gigs were female, as Jean Wilson claims, rather than boys dressed up as woman, which would have been the norm; cf. *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 163, n.61.

cord'. Whether this was the first recorded occasion of a game of lawn tennis, as Chambers claims²⁹, or whether it was more like five-a-side volleyball, as the term 'hand-ball' (114) suggests, it was certainly one of the more unusual ways of entertaining the Queen. This attempt seems to have been successful as well because Elizabeth watched the match for more than an hour and a half.

Harry Boyle and Lucille Valentino have elucidated certain topical features of the aquatic show enacted on the second day.³⁰ A brief summary of their contributions to the discussion of the entertainment will suffice. In his detailed examination Boyle identifies the emblematic scenery of the show as 'a marine environment descriptive of some geographic location [that] indicates that there is some hostile and military significance about the "lands" depicted within it.'³¹ He then explains that the islands in the lake are emblems of England (the Ship Isle) and Spain (the Snayl Mount):

See where her ship [England] remaines, whose silke-woven takling
Is turned to twigs, and threefold mast to trees,
Receiving life from verdure of your lookes; ...
Yon ugly monster creeping from the South
To spoyle these blessed fields of Albion,
By selfe same beams is chang'd into a snaile,
Whose bullrush hornes are not of force to hurt. (110)

Boyle claims that Sylvanus's cry of 'Revenge, Revenge' when he is pulled into the lake by Nereus (112) has topical significance. The English ship *The Revenge*, a galleon in Lord Thomas Howard's squadron, who was the Lord Admiral's cousin and in command of the important expedition for prize off the Azores, had sunk only three weeks prior to the Elvetham entertainment. Those opposed to the Howards'

²⁹ *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), I, p. 123.

³⁰ 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham', 146-66; and 'Playing for Power', pp. 86-96.

³¹ 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham', 151.

naval leadership blamed the tragedy entirely on Thomas Howard's incompetence.³² The reality behind the water show could not be glossed over so shortly after the disastrous event, so Boyle maintains, but 'placing the allusion in the mouth of the disaffected Sylvanus ... mitigated its force'.³³

Elizabeth's naming of Neaera's bark as *The Bonadventure* is identified as another topical naval reference by Boyle. A great ship of that name belonged to the Royal Navy and had served as Sir Francis Drake's flagship in 1585 and 1586. She had later seen action in the repulse of the Armada and, at the time of the Elvetham entertainment in September 1591, was anchored off the Azores as part of Lord Thomas Howard's squadron. Boyle concludes that the water show was designed to defend the naval policies of the Howard family, Charles Howard, Lord Effingham, being the Lord Admiral and Hertford's brother-in-law:

... it is reasonable to suppose that Hertford and his more prominent brother-in-law pooled their resources to produce an entertainment whose lavish and expert display would touch the Queen's heart on Hertford's behalf and whose serious message of reassurance, discreetly given, would bolster her confidence in her favorite's leadership.³⁴

However, Boyle fails to prove that Howard or his policies were under attack in 1591. Neither can he explain why Hertford should go to such inordinate lengths for a mere brother-in-law.

Valentino too stresses the relevance of the Howard connection and adds the significant fact that Hertford's brother, Lord Henry Seymour, had been an important figure in the English victory over the Armada. She argues that the entertainment was

³² Popular sentiment against Thomas Howard caused rumours that he was 'condemned as a coward or for the King of Spain'; cf. CSPD, III, 117.

³³ 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham', 154.

³⁴ Ibid., 163.

partially devised to remind the Queen of the Howard/Seymour contribution to the defeat of the Spanish, claiming, for example, that the 'very shape of the pond recalls Howard's victory over the Armada, for the Spanish battle-formation was a crescent or half-moon.'³⁵ Whether the evocation of the battle-formation was really intended, as Curtis Bright proposes, is debatable, but I would agree with him that there is no evidence to suggest any explicit praise of Howard's role in the famous victory. Moreover, the crescent moon formation was hardly unique in naval history.³⁶

It is far more likely that the crescent-shaped lake was intended as a grandiose compliment and allusion to Elizabeth the Virgin Queen in one of her standard mythical roles as Diana, goddess of the moon. By 1591, the moon had become the dominant planetary symbol in the cult of the Queen. Once Elizabeth was past childbearing age her virginity was seized upon to enhance her mystique. In poetry Elizabeth was often likened to Astraea, the last of the immortals to flee the earth, who had been turned into the constellation Virgo.³⁷ Sir Walter Raleigh, in an extension of this idea, addressed Elizabeth in his verse as goddess of the moon, Diana or Cynthia. By the end of the 1580s, Raleigh's idea had been taken up by others. Lunar imagery was employed by Sir John Davies in his *Ode to Cynthia*, but there are also several paintings and miniatures that depict Elizabeth wearing a crescent moon in her hair.³⁸ In 1587 the New Year gifts received by Elizabeth included a jewel from Lord Howard shaped 'like half moons, garnished with sparks of rubies and diamond pendants', and a red and white feather fan from Sir Francis

³⁵ 'Playing for Power', p. 88.

³⁶ 'Realpolitik', 26, n.13.

³⁷ Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 30.

³⁸ Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Elizabeth I* (London: Hudson & Thames, 1987), p. 125.

Drake, 'the handle of gold enamelled with a half moon of mother of pearl'.³⁹ Constructing a crescent-shaped lake specifically for a three-day royal visit clearly aimed and succeeded at surpassing all previous attempts at complimenting the Queen.

However, it is highly significant that a crescent moon was one of the dominant symbols in Hertford's coat of arms (see Appendix II, illustration 6). Even in what appears to be the most elaborate compliment to the Queen, Hertford created a memorial to his family. Throughout the entertainment, the crescent moon is a recurrent theme in different forms. The artificial lake was given the shape of a crescent. During the third day's magnificent banquet, the Hertford coat of arms were probably offered in sugar-work, together with the arms of the rest of the nobility. Finally, they decorated the title page of the printed entertainment text. Hertford's coat of arms depicted the same emblem that featured prominently in the cult of Elizabeth, and he was making every effort to underline this fact. This may have been done in an attempt to remind everybody that his family would provide ideal candidates to continue the royal line. It seems that Hertford, while he celebrated the Queen's visit, skilfully manipulated the occasion to make a powerful statement on behalf of his family.

³⁹ J. Nichols, *Progresses and Public Processions*, II, pp. 498-9.

VII.3.2 The Iconography and Sexual Politics of the Elvetham Entertainment

With the discussion of the significance of the crescent-shaped lake we have already touched on the imagery of the entertainment. The figure of Diana, virgin goddess of the moon, plays a major part. In his article of 1992 Curtis Breight pointed out the ambiguous representation of Elizabeth as the virgin goddess Diana on the one hand, and as Venus, goddess of love and fertility, on the other.⁴⁰ The tension between these two, seemingly contradictory depictions, is noticeable in the Elvetham entertainment.

Throughout, Elizabeth is addressed as either Diana or Cynthia, an alternative appellation for Diana, by the characters. Interestingly, this virginal mythography competes with a form of sexual discourse as Elizabeth is also equated with Venus, the goddess of love. Although this is by no means unheard of --as the *Aprill Eclogue* (1579) and the brief association with Venus in the Cowdray pageant prove-- it is here part of a thread of sexual references that runs through the entertainment.⁴¹ This thread helps to unify the events and, at the same time, aims to rewrite the sexual history of Hertford and Catherine Grey.

As soon as she entered Elvetham park, Elizabeth was addressed in Latin by a Poet. He claims that he has been sent by Apollo, whose prophet he is, and the Muses. He apostrophizes her as 'Augusta' and 'Empresse', imperial appellations especially appropriate in view of the artificial lake, which seemed to promise *naumachia* similar to the ancient ones devised in celebration of Augustus's victory at Actium.

⁴⁰ 'Realpolitik', passim.

⁴¹ Spenser's poem established the convention that virginity and fertility are not opposites but complementary properties in the figure of Elizabeth.

At the end of his speech, he asks six virgins (the Graces and the Hours) to ‘sing sweet triumphal songs’, which in turn recalls the Roman tradition of allowing victorious army commanders a triumph on their return to Rome. Implicitly, Elizabeth is equated with Diana in her capacity of controlling the sea: ‘Ditior est Ponto, Pontum quoque temperat una’, translated in the entertainment text as ‘More rich than Seas, shee doth command the Seas’ (103, 104).⁴² This implicit reference is made explicit the next day when she is greeted by Nereus as ‘Faire Cinthia the wide Ocean’s Empresse’ (109). The Muses, or so the Poet tells us, look on Elizabeth as ‘that English Nymph, in face and shape/Resembling some great Goddess’, and then even liken her to Jupiter:

... and whose beames
Doe sprinkle Heaven with unacquainted light,
While shee doth visite Semers fraudlesse house,
As Jupiter did honour with his presence
The poore thatcht cottage, where Philaemon dwelt? (104, ll.11-15)

What seems to be standard complimentary rhetoric, and therefore not particularly remarkable, takes an interesting turn, however. The reference to Philaemon recalls the ancient myth of Philaemon and Baukis. Elizabeth is represented as Jupiter who, together with Mercury, has come down to earth disguised as a weary traveller. Wherever the camouflaged gods go doors are shut in their faces, and nobody is prepared to give them shelter until they come to the humble cottage of Philaemon and his wife Baukis. The two old people are friendly and hospitable and welcome the “travellers” into their poor hut. Hertford is cast as Philaemon, which, at first glance, seems to fit his situation rather well. Compared to other estates, Elvetham was a rather humble abode. However, Hertford is portrayed as keen to offer

⁴² To avoid confusion, henceforth only the page numbers of the English translation will be given in brackets.

hospitality to his godlike Queen, although he is naturally aware that his modest house is not fit to receive such an important visitor. But like Philaemon, he welcomes the visitors warmly, although he could have left his guests on the doorstep, at least in theory. While many of Elizabeth's hosts were not too enthusiastic about having her visit, most of them had little choice in the matter, and very few actually succeeded in extricating themselves.

This is only half the story, though. In the original myth, Philaemon and Baukis are richly rewarded for the kindness shown the gods. When shortly after a deluge floods the earth the old people's cottage is the only house that is not washed away. Instead, it is turned into a magnificent temple where the couple can spend the rest of their lives as priests. Eventually they metamorphose into an oak and a lime tree standing side by side and are worshipped as part of a tree cult.⁴³ Elizabeth had been brought up on Greek and Latin mythology and would not have missed the possibilities the story of Jupiter and Philaemon entailed. After the rather bold display of power by the welcoming committee, Hertford seems to have switched to a more subtle technique of asserting himself with the Poet's speech. Was he indicating to Elizabeth that he was hoping for an equally rich reward as Philaemon and Baukis for his hospitality, such as the legitimization of his sons, for example?

The Poet proceeds to explain that he represents the host: 'Under my person Semer hides himselfe,/His mouth yeelds prayers, his eie the olive branch' (104). The olive branch figures prominently in this entertainment and in the Cowdray one. We are informed by the narrator that the Poet was holding an olive branch in his hand, 'to

⁴³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VIII, 611ff.

declare what continuall peace and plentie he did both wish and aboade [prophecy to] her Majestie' (102). Sylvanus, too, carries an olive tree in his right hand when he encounters Elizabeth on the second day. The Poet, and Hertford under his guise, may have offered an olive branch to the Queen, but he was accompanied by a "cavalry" of retainers at the time.

The conventions of courtly communication guaranteed that nothing in the entertainment would be too direct or hazardous, but there are some disturbing moments. The myth of Jupiter and Philaemon is ambiguous, as is the olive branch carried by the Poet. The passage referring to Seymour, spelt 'Semer' in the translation of the Poet's speech quoted above, is especially intriguing. It can be explained as merely an alternative spelling, but this choice is both daring and ironic, given that the regime must have suspected Hertford. More importantly, such a parallel could be heard as well. The chosen spelling merely made explicit a potential meaning in the spoken text. 'Semer' could mean then what it means now, as shown by Vincentio's desire to discover 'what our seemers be' in *Measure for Measure*.⁴⁴ Just in case anybody had missed the *double entendre*, the Poet makes sure by speaking of 'Semers fraudlesse house' (my emphasis). Jean Wilson interprets this as a reference to the simplicity of Elvetham, 'so poor a house [that it could not] offer the deceitful luxury of the court', although she acknowledges the potential irony too.⁴⁵ To choose 'Semer' is not exactly subversive, but it provides a strong hint that the apparent obsequiousness of the host may be just a mask. This has the effect of destabilizing the spectator as well as the reader.

⁴⁴ I.iii.54; see also OED, under "Seemer": 'one who seems, or makes a pretense or show'.

⁴⁵ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 162, n.37.

It is remarkable how many references to truth, deception and disguise can be found in the text. The Poet greeting Elizabeth is ‘veridicus vates’ (102), i.e. a sooth-saying poet, and his costume underlines this fact: he wears the *cothurnus*, the high boots of the tragic actor. We are given this information by the narrator, which means that it was only available to the reader, but the Poet’s speech picks up the theme immediately. Apart from the deliberate ambiguity in ‘Semer’s fraudlesse house’ mentioned above and the use of the Philaemon myth to which Jupiter’s and Mercury’s disguise is central, the choice of words in ‘Under my person Semer hides himselfe’ is interesting (104; my emphasis). The refrain of the song that the Hours and Graces perform, immediately subsequent to the Poet’s speech, is ‘Accept our unfaigned joy’ (106), which is mirrored in the ‘unfayned reverence’ that Elizabeth’s presence arouses in everybody, as Sylvanus claims the next day (111). Both these assertions seem potentially ironic in the context of a progress entertainment, where a great deal of feigned joy and reverence and going through the motions on all parts must have existed. Shortly after, Neaera’s speech, which formed part of the same pageant, states that Nereus, ‘who never sings but truth’ has informed her of Elizabeth’s arrival (112).

On the third day the shepherd Corydon calls on the heavens to bear witness that he is speaking the truth when he claims to love Phyllida: ‘Never loved a truer youth’ (114). This parallels Sylvanus’s offering to swear that he will not ravish Neaera if she were to come ashore (112). In the event, Sylvanus --who represents lasciviousness-- is deceived by Nereus, but Corydon --who stands for true love-- is rewarded when Phyllida finally gives in to his wooing (114). The theme of truth and deception runs through the entertainment. Hertford seems to have felt it necessary to

allay the Queen's suspicions about him and his motives by stressing, through different personae, that his motives and the sentiments expressed via his entertainment were genuine.

The Poet's speech then returns to complimentary rhetoric:

This is your Semers heart and quality:
To whom all things are joyes, while thou art present,
To whom nothing is pleasing, in thine absence. (105, ll.35-7)

The next thirteen lines describe flora and fauna, animal and vegetable fecundity, and Elizabeth herself is said to incite sexual desire in the whole of nature. The subtext for this passage is the opening of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, which itself had been closely imitated by Spenser in *The Fairie Queene* (IV.iv.44-7). The Elvetham passage is a somewhat loose imitation. Lucretius begins his poem with an invocation of 'alma Venus', Venus the life-giver, who alone guides all living things: 'quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas'.⁴⁶ Through *imitatio* the Poet casts Elizabeth as Venus, who is not lascivious herself but inspires in others the natural desire to procreate. This role is confirmed when the Hours and Graces, the traditional handmaidens of Venus, ceremoniously conduct her to her lodgings following the Poet's speech. They then sing a song that reiterates the major themes of the Poet's oration:

Now th' ayre is sweeter than sweet balme,
And Satyrs daunce about the palme:
Now earth, with verdure newly dight,
Gives perfect signe of her delight.
O beautilous Quene of second Troy,
Accept our unfained joy. (106)

⁴⁶ I.2, I.21. The quotation comes from *Titi Lucreti Cari de Rerum Natura Libri Sex*, ed. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 176.

In spite of the fact that the entertainment took place in early autumn, nature is said to produce new plant life and eternal spring has come. With Elizabeth cast as Astraea, the Golden Age has returned to earth (105, ll.51-4). The Satyrs, traditionally licentious figures, perform a dance that evokes popular culture, like the dance around the Maypole, which itself was a pagan fertility rite. Given that Sylvanus and his band of satyrs were to play a part in the following day's water show, it seems likely that the song describes what is actually happening. Just as the Hours and Graces are actually strewing flowers whilst referring to this activity in their speech, and the characters are performing a dumb show that is mourning Elizabeth's departure whilst the Poet describes it in his speech, it is possible that the satyrs performed a quasi-Maypole dance evoking the rites and desires of spring at this point. Thus Elizabeth found herself scripted almost immediately as a sexual goddess rather than a virgin one.

The theme of desire is continued on the second day. The Tuesday show is by far the most spectacular one and was centred almost exclusively on the lake. The narrator sets the scene, describes the characters' costumes and the events that were to follow in great detail. Then follow the verse speeches by the three main characters: Nereus, 'the Prophet of the Sea', Sylvanus, 'a God of the Woodes', and Neaera, 'the old supposed love of Sylvanus' (108).

Similar to the Poet's speech, Nereus's oration casts Elizabeth as 'Cinthia' from line one. His speech is partly a political allegory against Spain, partly a colonialist fantasy of 'endlesse treasure' to be found in the New World. The show alludes to the defeat of the Armada three years previously ('... we Sea-gods,/ (Whose jealous

waves have swallowed up your foes,/And to your Realme are walled impregnable)', 109) and the territorial ambitions regarding England that were still attributed to the Spanish. However, we are told that Elizabeth possesses mythical powers to smite these aspirations with just one glance: 'Yon ugly monster creeping from the South/To spoyle these blessed fields of Albion,/By selfe beams is chang'd into a snaile' (109-10). In the Poet's speech, life-giving and/or life-sustaining powers were attributed to her glance. Here it has almost life-saving qualities because it can metamorphose the threatening monster into a snail.

After the delivery of Nereus's speech a present was given to Elizabeth on behalf of Hertford. At the same time the sea god emphasizes that the Earl acknowledges that he owes his position to Elizabeth:

[India] left me this jewell to present your Grace,
For hym, that under you doth hold this place. (109, ll.20-1)

This takes up a sentiment the Poet had also voiced at the end of his speech:

Come, therefore, come under our humble rooffe,
And with a becke commaund what it containes:
For all is thine; each part obeys thy will;
Did not each part obey, the wholl should perish. (105, ll.63-6)

The presentation of Nereus's gift was followed by a song using the popular echo device (used before at Kenilworth in 1575, and to be used again at Ditchley in 1592). The echo celebrates Elizabeth as the second sun, Astraea, the life-giving force. It wishes her long life and happiness, all of which was fairly standard Elizabethan rhetoric. Sylvanus and his followers, who had been lurking nearby, then approached Elizabeth 'from the wood', their natural habitat. Sylvanus handed over another present to the Queen, a 'scutchion, ingraven with goulden characters'. This had allegedly been dropped by Apollo and bore the inscription 'Detur dignissimae'.

The presentation of the escutcheon recalls the practice of giving impresa shields to the Queen during the annual Accession Day Tilts in November. At the same time we are reminded of the judgement of Paris, which seems to indicate that there is a conflation of two different traditions here. The inscription is almost certainly an imitation of George Peele's in his drama *The Arraignment of Paris* (published in the 1580s), as Curtis Breight has pointed out.⁴⁷ The inscription there read 'Detur Pulcherrimae', in close resemblance to the original Greek myth.⁴⁸

In Peele's play Paris's judgement is overturned in the end when Diana awards the golden apple to Queen Elizabeth, thus acknowledging that it is rightfully hers. Elizabeth is the indisputable centrepiece of the play's finale. At Elvetham the Queen is not "pulcherrima" but "dignissima", not the most beautiful, but the most worthy. This is a way of politicizing the allegory, but Elizabeth remains the focus of the show. Until, that is, she is subtly displaced in favour of Neaera, 'the old supposed love of Sylvanus'. Sylvanus's humiliation when Nereus 'did plucke Sylvanus over the head and eares into the water, where all the sea-gods, laughing, did insult over him' (112) is funny and appealing.

We had been given a taste of this comedic element immediately prior to Nereus's speech when the character India climbed onto 'the Shippe Ile, directly before her Majestie', only to somersault into the water. In spite of the playfulness of this episode, one cannot help recalling Hertford's personal history at this point. Like the Poet, who represents Hertford's fictional *alter ego*, Sylvanus carries an 'olive tree' (111). By furnishing Sylvanus with exactly the same prop he is associated with the

⁴⁷ 'Realpolitik', 30.

⁴⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, XXIV, 25ff.

Earl too. The sylvan god is hoping that Neaera, who is in the pinnace on the lake, might join him on dry land. Nereus promises that she will do that provided Sylvanus swears a solemn vow 'Not to prophane her undefiled state' (112). Significantly, this was exactly the accusation that had been levelled at Hertford when he was condemned for having deflowered a virgin of royal blood. If this episode plays out allegorically the affair between Hertford and Lady Grey, Neaera, 'the old supposed love of Sylvanus', represents Catherine. She and Hertford would have met regularly at Court, but in theory she was unreachable for him, as unreachable as Neaera in her pinnace is for Sylvanus, because she enjoyed special status and protection as one of Elizabeth's Maids of Honour. But Sylvanus seems to be prepared to take the vow of chastity demanded of him: 'Here, take my hand, and therewithall I vowe' (112). He has to realize immediately, however, that Nereus has tricked him when he is pulled into the water. Nereus claims that he meant to 'extinguish [the satyr's] wanton fire', but in fact humiliates him not only in front of all the sea gods but also Sylvanus's own followers. In this allegory, Nereus, the god of the sea, represents Elizabeth, the 'Empresse of the sea'. We know that the Queen frequently blocked or forbade marriages of her Maids of Honour to men she deemed unsuitable. If they dared arrange their own marriages, as Hertford and Lady Grey had done, the ensuing punishment was usually severe.⁴⁹ Is Hertford implying that, like Sylvanus, he had been unnecessarily humiliated in front of his peers as well as publicly, although he had only had honorable intentions?

⁴⁹ The most famous example is probably Sir Walter Raleigh's relationship with Elizabeth Throckmorton. On learning that her Maid of Honour was pregnant and that she and Raleigh had planned to get married, the Queen had both thrown into the Tower. She never forgave Raleigh or his wife completely.

This question is difficult, if not impossible, to answer. A direct and open complaint during a progress entertainment would have been far too dangerous from Hertford's point of view and might have destroyed forever his sons' chances to succeed. Airing one's grievances by way of an allegory, however, had the combined advantage of both making the point and being sufficiently subtle. Some further piquancy is added by the fact that Sylvanus hopes Neaera 'may relent in sight of Beauties Quene', i.e. in Elizabeth's presence. What sounds like a traditional compliment, has an interesting twist. The affair between Hertford and Lady Grey had been conducted right under the Queen's nose, and the truth had only emerged when Catherine had become pregnant. In his trial, Hertford was then accused of having 'deflowered a virgin of the blood royal in the Queen's house'.⁵⁰

This episode represents a form of struggle between desire and chastity among the figures surrounding Elizabeth. Sylvanus's natural licentiousness, together with his earlier reference to the 'wanton dayes of goulden age' (111), not only serve to vindicate his current desire for Neaera but are also a reminder that days of youth are a time of sensuality. Elizabeth as Venus is said to encourage new plant life and the desire to procreate in animals as soon as she enters the Elvetham estate. Similar to the rest of the living world, it is suggested, Sylvanus feels driven to consummate his desire for Neaera. He is naturally sensuous and Elizabeth's influence heightens his predisposition — he cannot help it.

Circumstantial similarities would have reminded the courtly spectators of the Hertford/Grey affair. It seems that the Earl attempted to explain and exculpate his

⁵⁰ William Camden, *History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth* (London: 1675), pp. 58-9; my emphasis.

youthful behaviour by laying at least part of the blame at Elizabeth's door. Gloriana sparked intense desire one moment, only to extinguish it the next. The courtiers as well as Elizabeth herself knew that. Arousing her courtiers' admiration, unconditional love, and even desire was part of a courtly game, played according to fixed rules. Hertford had broken those rules –even if not with her– and suffered for it.

The topic of love, desire and sexuality pervades the entertainment. On the third day the song of Corydon and Phyllida develops the theme further. This is not so much a conventional song lamenting frustrated love as a reiteration of the rites of May and successful love. At the end of the song, Phyllida is made 'Lady of the May'. Jean Wilson states that 'Hellenore's being made the Lady of May in [Spenser's] *Fairie Queene* III.x.44 is an indication of her sexual laxness, but it is doubtful if such an implication was intended here.'⁵¹ Breight, on the other hand, claims precisely that when he asserts that '... it is hard to deny what the song says, that "Love ... was with kisses sweet concluded", which strongly implies consummation'.⁵² I am inclined to agree with him. The song represents a return to the theme of the natural sexuality of spring that had been introduced on the first day and that the defeat of Sylvanus had temporarily interrupted.

On the fourth and final day Elizabeth was confronted by her mirror image when the 'Fayery Queene' appeared in the garden below her window. She addresses Elizabeth as both 'your Imperial Grace' (115, l.6), which recalls the Poet's earlier epithets 'Augusta' and 'Empresse', and 'Phoebe', another appellation for Diana, which

⁵¹ *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, p. 164, n.89.

⁵² 'Realpolitik', 32.

underlines the virginal aspect of her persona once more. However, the sexual theme is advanced at the same time: 'amorous starres fall nightly in my lap' (115, l.14). More importantly, the subsequent 'Fairies Song', performed by the Fairie Queen and her maids, reiterates indirectly ideas previously expressed:

Elisa is the fairest Quene,
That ever trod upon this greene.
Elisaes eyes are blessed starres,
Inducing peace, subduing warres. (116, ll.1-4)

The notion of treading on the green evokes popular culture, the rites of May and ancient fertility rites when we consider that "green" can mean 'village green' or 'a piece of public or common grassy land situated in or near a town or village, from which it takes its name'.⁵³ This passage recalls the Satyrs dancing 'around the palme', as mentioned in the song sung by the Graces and the Hours on day one. The verse on peace and war reflects Venus as Lucretius portrayed her, the goddess who causes peace by subduing the god of war, Mars (l.31-7). This, not coincidentally, was one of the ways Elizabeth liked to see herself represented and would no doubt have gone down well.

The Fairies Song was the penultimate show of the entertainment because an hour later the Queen and her entourage left. As she passed through the park in a coach all the characters she had encountered previously were present. There was a 'dum shew', where all characters were 'wringing their hands, and shewing signe of sorrow for her departure' (116). The Poet, clad in black to signify his sadness, was given the task of bidding a formal goodbye to Elizabeth.⁵⁴ Once again Elizabeth is addressed

⁵³ See OED under "green".

⁵⁴ The device of dressing in black to signify mourning or sorrow at Elizabeth's departure was used again to good effect at Harefield in 1602.

as 'Cynthia', stressing her virginal aspect. However, the central idea of the farewell is the loss of Elizabeth as a life-giving force, as Venus:

Leaves fal, grasse dies, beasts of the wood hang head,
 Birds cease to sing, and everie creature wailes,
 To see the season alter with this change:
 For how can Sommer stay, when Sunne departs? (117)

The line 'For how can Sommer stay, when Sunne departs?' is repeated four times, refrain-like, and emphasizes the message that Elizabeth's departure will bring autumn, winter and sorrow to Elvetham. The Poet implores her to stay or, failing that, to return as quickly as possible. His speech parallels, by exact contrast, his initial greeting and functions as a reminder of what spectacles she had seen. Just as the Queen's arrival inaugurated a new (supposedly everlasting) spring in late September, so her departure causes the natural world to retreat into the reality of autumn, and the death and decay associated with it. This oration picks up and concludes one of the major themes of the entertainment, the natural fecundity inspired by the Queen's physical presence.

Nereus, the other major character of the entertainment, has even left the water to thank the Queen for her largesse. This refers to some gifts, presumably of money, that were given to the actors by Elizabeth following the shows on the second and fourth days (113, 116). He too asserts that the Queen's departure will cause universal sorrow. To round off the entertainment, a consort of musicians played at the park gates. The musicians were concealed in a bower, thus creating the impression that nature itself lamented Elizabeth's departure. A song, appositely called 'Come againe' because all eight verses start with '(O) come againe', was performed for Elizabeth. It repeated and stressed the idea that the Queen's presence

brings joy and beauty, her absence, on the other hand, sorrow and 'eternall night'. Elizabeth then thanked the Earl of Hertford and left.

The Queen had two devices of the third and fourth days repeated. The narrator puts this down to the apparent pleasure she received from the songs when she heard them first. Therefore, she requested an encore. That is one interpretation. Could it have been the case that she was so fascinated or disturbed by the fact that she was cast primarily as a goddess inspiring growth and sexual desire that she wanted to re-examine the text? The representation as a sexual goddess stood in stark contrast to her usual role as Virgin Queen, the figure whose role it was to frustrate desire in fetes such as *The Four Foster Children of Desire* (1581) and the woman to whom Daphne flees in order to escape from the lust of Apollo at the Sudeley entertainment in 1592. She might have also detected some implicit references to Hertford's biography that seemed worth re-examining. However, the larger sexual context in which these songs and the Sylvanus episode are placed seem to stress the positive, even idyllic, aspects of fertility:

All ... creatures strive to shewe their joyes.
The crooked-winding kid trips ore the lawnes;
The milkewite heafer wantons with the bull;
The trees shew pleasure with their quivering leaves,
The meddow with new grasse, the vine with grapes,
The running brookes with sweet and silvers sound. (105, ll.41-6)

The informed Elizabethan reader was aware that Hertford's relationship with Catherine Grey had produced two sons who had a claim to the throne while their ageing Queen, who supposedly inspired fertility in the world surrounding her, had no heir and, at the age of fifty-eight, no prospect of ever having a child.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Cf. C.C. Breight, 'Realpolitik', 34.

According to the text, the Queen was more than pleased with the entertainment. Her words and gestures seem to convey that much. Unfortunately, we see her reactions only through the narrator's eyes, who readily interprets Elizabeth's demeanour for us. She comes across as gracious, generous, and as happy to play her part. The Queen shows herself to be approachable and, almost literally, in touch with the populace. This was the image she had been cultivating for years and her behaviour during progresses and their entertainments was well rehearsed. That does not mean, of course, that it was necessarily disingenuous, only that she was playing as much of a part as her hosts did on these occasions. This is a fact of which we should never lose sight.

Not surprisingly, those scholars who have studied the Elvetham entertainment have come to the conclusion that the fete was a resounding success and that, as a consequence, Hertford was restored to the Queen's favour after a hiatus of over twenty years. The narrator's comments on Elizabeth's reactions reflect the pleasure she apparently took in the individual devices and how much she appreciated them. Thus, when Hertford rode out with his three hundred men to greet and escort the Queen back to Elvetham we are told that 'her Majesty was to him and his most gracious' (102). A little later the narrator informs us that on the delivery of the Poet's Latin speech she 'deined to receive [the scroll on which it had been written] with her owne hande' — surely as a sign of special favour (106). When Elizabeth was welcomed by Lady Hertford, her former Maid of Honour, she seemed genuinely pleased to be reunited with her. She embraced her, raised her from her kneeling position and kissed her, 'using manie comfortable and princely Speeches, as wel to hir, as to the Earl of Hertford standing hard by' (106). This happened to the great

rejoicing of all onlookers who probably included, as we earlier speculated, not only members of the Hertford household, but also friends, neighbours and local people. Elizabeth was in her element, being at her most gracious and best with an audience to watch her. She knew what was expected of her on such occasions and performed. After dinner that first evening six musicians, provided specifically by Hertford for Elizabeth's entertainment, played for her. Again the narrator tells us that the Queen was so pleased with what she heard that she renamed one of the pavaues as a sign of her special appreciation.

On the morning of the second day the Countess of Hertford gave a present to Elizabeth, 'which greatly pleased and contented hir Highnesse' (107). During the water show the Queen actively took part when she named Neaera's pinnacle 'The Bonadventure'. She enjoyed the show so much that the actors would have been contented with her approbation, or so the narrator claims, but Elizabeth also gave them some money prior to her departure (113).

On day three the Queen had the Song of Corydon and Phyllida repeated and that again is put down to the assumption that the Queen liked it so much. The game of 'bord and cord' played in the afternoon seems to have met with her approval too because she stayed to watch it for over an hour and a half (114).

On the last day of her stay Elizabeth commanded the Fairies Song and its accompanying dance to be performed 'three times over'. She then thanked the actors and again a monetary reward was given. Within an hour the Queen and her entourage were ready to leave Elvetham. It was raining heavily, but Elizabeth

decided to 'behold and hear the whole action' (116). She was in a coach at the time rather than on horseback, which might have made the decision easier, but occasions like these usually saw her at her most patient and polite. Elizabeth was a seasoned performer and particularly good at goodbyes. She was also aware that some locals and neighbours might have turned out to see her off, and that this, therefore, was a good opportunity once again to cultivate the image of the approachable monarch to her people. At the park gates the Queen stopped to listen to the music that was being played for her, took off her mask --she was not a 'Semer'-- as a great privilege, and thanked the musicians personally.

Finally, Elizabeth said goodbye to her host and thanked him for the entertainment. Hertford, the perfect host adhering to the appropriate ceremony and ritual until the last minute, was either waiting at the park gates for her or had accompanied her there. The narrator's final comments are self-explanatory, or so it seems:

Her Majestie was so highly pleased with this and the rest, that she openly said to the Earl of Hertford, that the beginning, processe, and end of this entertainment, was so honorable, she would not forget the same [... was so honorable, as hereafter hee should finde the rewarde thereof in her especiall favour].

And manie most happie years may her gracious Majestie continue, to favour and foster him, and all others which do truly love and honor her. (118)

The last sentence reads like a conventional wish for the monarch's longevity. At the same time however, it serves to remind the reader, and ultimately Elizabeth herself, of the responsibility, or at least moral obligation, to promote and nurture Hertford because he truly loves and honours her, as the entertainment has so clearly shown. The ball was now firmly in the Queen's court, especially after the entertainment text had been published. There must have been some hope or expectation on Hertford's part that his family's situation might improve. The aftermath of the entertainment

and what precisely Elizabeth had in mind as a token of her ‘especiall favour’ will be discussed in the next chapter.

VIII. THE AFTERMATH OF THE ELVETHAM ENTERTAINMENT

*It was an ... excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much
modesty as cunning.*

(*Hamlet*, II.ii.456-60)

Elizabeth's departure from Elvetham on that rainy September day in 1591 may well have been the formal end of the entertainment, but it is not the end of the story. A closer examination of the Cowdray pageant a month earlier has shown that the 'representational surface' of an elite entertainment does not necessarily match the underlying realities.¹

Elizabeth's outward response to Viscount Montague's entertainment had seemed very positive indeed when she knighted both Montague's son and son-in-law prior to her departure. In isolation, this act can be interpreted as a reward for the entertainment, and/or an indication that a position of trust had been (re)gained, or even as an openly-acknowledged tolerance of the Catholic faith. Within the historical context, however, the situation looks markedly different. Even if Elizabeth actually trusted Montague's protestations of loyalty on his family's and his neighbours' behalf, they did not improve the government's attitude towards the Catholic community as a whole. On the contrary, governmental suspicion and intolerance of Catholicism actually increased in the wake of the Cowdray entertainment. By the same token, the Montague family, in spite of all declarations

¹ The term 'representational surface' has been borrowed from Curtis C. Breight, 'Caressing the Great: Viscount Montague's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Cowdray, 1591', *Suss.Arch.Coll.*, 127 (1989), 159.

of loyalty, continued to promote treasonous activities under Elizabeth and well into the reign of King James when the second Viscount became heavily implicated in the Gunpowder Plot.

When the narrator states, at the end of the text of the Elvetham entertainment, that ‘Her Majestie was so highly pleased ... that she openly said to the Earle of Hertford, that the beginning, processe, and end of this his entertainment, was so honorable, as hereafter he should find the rewarde thereof in her especiall favour’ (118), this once more needs to be interpreted within its context. As far as we know, no discernible ‘favour’ was shown to Hertford in the aftermath of the entertainment apart from a belated lieutenancy in 1602. Elizabeth had planned to pay him another visit that particular summer, but it never took place.² The Earl was not given a political office of major consequence or position of power under Elizabeth, and at the time of the Queen’s death there was no hope for his elder son to inherit the Hertford titles or property, let alone have a legitimate claim to the crown. Elizabeth’s sincerity at the end of the entertainment was matched by Hertford’s own. If she was unwilling to favour him, he was certainly willing to destabilize her position by seeking legal redress in a period of great political instability.

Since neither Hertford nor Lady Grey had been able to produce proof of a legal marriage, the couple’s two sons had been found illegitimate by an ecclesiastic commission in 1562. This decision could be reversed by legal methods, however, and many attempts to overturn the verdict were made. An appeal in Hertford’s younger son’s name, Thomas Seymour, was first submitted on 20 November 1580.³

² See chp. IX.

³ For evidence that Hertford started his appeal as early as 1562 cf. *A Collection of*

This appeal was repeated every year from 1581 to 1588, except in 1583. Interestingly, it was dropped in the two years prior to Hertford's entertainment of the Queen at Elvetham, but renewed roughly two months after her visit, and again the next year.⁴ Another two-year abeyance in the appeal, in 1593 and 1594, may be put down to the Hertfords' recognition of its utter failure. Although it had been renewed following the Earl's magnificent entertainment, it had yielded nothing.

Hertford himself lodged another appeal in 1595. A possible answer to the question of why he chose this particular moment and had not pushed his sons' claim harder immediately after the entertainment could lie in a book by Robert Parsons, published under the pseudonym of Richard Doleman. Somewhat surprisingly, Parsons supported the Protestant Suffolk claim to the throne. He argued in this book that the Elizabethan regime had every right to claim that Hertford's elder son was illegitimate because no witnesses to his parents' legal marriage could be found. With the cleverness of the trained Jesuit, Parsons then maintained that the Earl's second son Thomas could be considered legitimate, however, because the official examination of Hertford and Grey constituted witnesses to the now legal marriage.⁵ From Parsons' point of view, the advancement of yet another candidate was intended to split the Protestant opposition and thus weaken its stand against his own preferred candidate, the Spanish Infanta.

Hertford's renewed attempt to overturn the verdict of illegitimacy in 1595 was to bring about a dramatic alteration in his circumstances. In October of that year, he

State Papers ... left by William Cecil Lord Burghley, ed. Samuel Haynes and William Murdin (London: John Lane, 1740), pp. 369, 378, 396, 404f, 411ff; HMC *Cal. Salisbury MSS*, XIII, 517.

⁴ CSPD, II, 554, 626, 694; CSPD, III, 121, 281f; CSPD, IV, 122.

⁵ CSPD, III, 121, 281-2.

was committed to the Tower, in peril of his life. This radical reversal of fortune was caused by the death of Dr William Aubrey, Master of Requests, on 23 July. Through him Hertford had secretly (i.e. without the Queen's knowledge) recorded his heirs' claim. Aubrey's successor promptly informed the Queen of the situation and Hertford was imprisoned.⁶ He was not held long in the Tower, however, and released on 3 January 1596. Six years later he was made Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and Wiltshire (29 May 1602). Not surprisingly, Hertford seems to have fared somewhat better under James than under Elizabeth. He was sent as an Ambassador-Extraordinary to Brussels on 19 April 1605. Three years later he was re-appointed lord Lieutenant of Somerset and Wiltshire and, from June 1612 to March 1619, was High Steward of the revenues to Queen Anne. He died on 6 April 1621, and was buried with his first wife in Salisbury Cathedral, where a magnificent monument was erected to his memory.

Hertford's attempt of 1595 to overturn the verdict of the Court of Arches came not simply from the desire to ensure his sons' inheritance, but was also an attempt to make them legitimate contenders for the throne. But the government was a step ahead of him. On 21 June 1595 a certain Nicholas Williamson was interrogated on the charge of treason. He was asked to give testimony about any conspiracy against Elizabeth and specifically any 'plot or practice for the Succession'. Questioned regarding Hertford he replied that 'as for my lord of Huntingdon or my lord of Hertford or my lord of Derby, I could not learn of any friends or favourers they had beyond the sea.' Although this apparently reflects that Hertford was innocent, or at least not embroiled in any plots, we know that the regime was getting nervous about

⁶ CSPD, IV, 121; CSPD, VIII, 406-8.

a potential claim by Hertford, because Burghley himself was studying the case around 10 July 1595.⁷

Letters from Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney describe the events that were to follow. On 29 October Hertford was put under house arrest in London, and a week later he was committed to the Tower. On 12 November it was 'given out that Lord Hertford's son shall no more be called Beauchamp but Seimor and that he is sent for'.⁸ At the end of the month Hertford's wife Frances was in London, with the intention of begging the Queen for mercy, but two weeks later she had still not been granted an audience with Elizabeth.⁹ Instead, the Queen wrote to Lady Hertford, apparently to reassure her

... of the continuance of our former grace to yourself, and to preserve your spirit from those perturbations which love to the person offending, and apprehensions of the matter so far unexpected, might daily breed in your body and mind ... so believe that we ... will use no more severity than is requisite for others' caution in like cases, and it shall stand with honour and necessity.¹⁰

Apparently, Elizabeth was attempting to put Frances' mind at rest, while at the same time she would not make any promises where Hertford was concerned. The letter suggests that Lady Hertford was definitely not in disgrace, but that her husband might be made an example of as a warning to others.

The authorities may well have imprisoned Hertford as soon as they became aware of his legal attempts. However, Bright advances the theory that the "discovery" of the conspiracy by Sir Michael Blount to 'hold the Tower upon the death of Elizabeth against the lords of the privy council ... and to deliver it into the hands of ...

⁷ *HMC Hatfield*, V, 251-4 for Williamson; 273-4 for Burghley.

⁸ This remark refers to Hertford's elder son Edward, Lord Beauchamp.

Interestingly, he had no right to this title unless he was considered to be of legitimate birth.

⁹ *HMC Penshurst Place*, II, 177, 183, 184, 192, 197.

¹⁰ *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. G.B. Harrison (London: Cassell, 1935), p. 238.

Hertford, the Suffolk claimant to the throne' was the primary motive for the authorities to imprison the Earl.¹¹ It should be remembered at this point, however, that the Elizabethan regime proved adept at foiling as well as provoking and even manufacturing conspiracies. Blount's plot of 1594 was only revealed in November 1595 as the result of an investigation into massive riots on Tower Hill in June of that year. It does not really matter whether this particular conspiracy was real or fabricated. Its handling suggests strongly that the regime was deeply worried about Hertford's claim to the succession.

It is also important to remember that the attitude of the central figure in a conspiracy real, imagined, or invented might have little to do with the actions of his or her supporters. The "conspiracies" in which Elizabeth was allegedly involved during her sister Mary's reign as well as the case of Lady Jane Grey, Catherine Grey's elder sister, prove that conclusively. Jane had been a teenage girl with no political ambitions whatsoever when, through no fault of her own, she became embroiled in the Duke of Northumberland's machinations. Elizabeth herself had been far too careful not to get involved in anything too suspicious. But once Parsons had successfully "proved" that at least Hertford's younger son was legitimate, any number of conspiracies might crop up.

As a matter of fact, a few months after Hertford's release from the Tower Sir John Smith attempted to rally forces in Colchester around the claim of Hertford's younger son, Thomas Seymour. Thomas seems to have been lured into this plot without

¹¹ 'Realpolitik and Elizabethan Ceremony: The Earl of Hertford's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Elvetham, 1591', *RQ*, 45 (1992), 39; quote from Roger B. Manning, 'The Prosecution of Sir Michael Blount, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, 1595', *BIHR*, 67 (1984), 216.

knowledge of Smith's intentions. In the event, the movement collapsed quickly and Thomas died on 8 August 1600. It seems that apart from severe examinations, no proceedings were taken against either Hertford or his elder son Edward. The leniency with which father and son were treated was attributed to the existence of a considerable party in favour of the Suffolk claim to the succession, including Cecil, Raleigh, and Lord Howard of Effingham.¹²

After Thomas's death interest in his elder brother naturally grew again. There is some evidence of the interest in and support of a claim by Edward. On March 30, 1603, Robert Cecil's elder brother wrote to him, inquiring whether rumours that Edward had fled to France were true.¹³ Other evidence, dated 2 January, 1603, speaks of the passive involvement of Hertford in arranging a marriage between his grandson William, eldest son of his son Edward, to Arabella Stuart. Arabella's claim to the throne was second only to James's in the Stuart line, but some argued that she took precedence because of her birth in England. A marriage between Arabella and William was dynastically even more dangerous to the Elizabethan regime than Hertford's to Lady Grey had been because it would unite the major claims of the Stuart and Suffolk lines. However, Arabella was arrested even as the Queen was dying.¹⁴ Somewhat surprisingly, Hertford's vehement denial of involvement in this particular "plot" was accepted. His having anything to do with it becomes questionable in view of the fact that Arabella and William were eventually married in secret in 1610. Both were almost immediately imprisoned, but both managed to escape. Arabella was caught, sent to the Tower, and died in 1615. William, who had

¹² CSPD, VIII, 406-8.

¹³ *HMC Hatfield*, XV, 18, 222-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XII, 583ff; DNB sub "Arabella" (Stuart), "Seymour, William".

fled to the Continent, remained there until after her death. Later he was reconciled with James I and returned to England.

With the benefit of hindsight we know that the succession proved to be comparatively unproblematic, but Elizabeth's contemporaries were naturally most apprehensive. A peaceful succession was ensured not due to general calm, but because the Queen's politicians astutely engineered it. Deportation, imprisonment, and above all, the occasional show of force, proved very useful tools in this context. John Clapham, an astute contemporary commentator, describes and interprets Hertford's behaviour at the time of James' accession:

... the Lieutenants of Counties ... by direction from the Lords of the Council, proclaimed the King in their several governments, namely the Earl of Hertford, a man somewhat suspected by reason of his son's pretended title, showed himself not slack in that business; for himself proclaimed the King at Salisbury, either for that, as some thought, he saw the stream run so strongly another way as it was in vain for him to oppose it, and so, making use of the occasion, being satisfied that the right was elsewhere than in his own family, he had no intention at all to set his son's claim on foot. For doubtless, if he had attempted it, he should have made a hopeless hazard of his fortunes and life.¹⁵

The essence of the situation is captured in the final sentence. Hertford had done what he could to further his sons' claims, suffering a brief imprisonment in the process. This was intended to teach him (and others) a lesson, according to the Queen's letter to Lady Hertford. His "education" was completed when he watched the Earl of Essex being decapitated in 1601. Essex's execution was a salutary reminder, especially for the few lords present, that a challenge to the established order was definitely not allowed. A letter from Egerton, Buckhurst, and Cecil to the Constable of the Tower seems to indicate that the Queen herself orchestrated the

¹⁵ John Clapham, *Certain Observations Concerning the Life and Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. Evelyn and Conyers Read (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1951), p. 106.

event. The noblemen who were to witness the execution were given the “best seats”, sitting on a platform before the scaffold. Apart from the Earl of Cumberland, Viscount Bindon, Lords Thomas Howard, Darcy and Compton, Hertford was there to watch.¹⁶

Hertford probably gave up his attempts to overturn the verdict of the Court of Arches after 1595 because all of them had proved abortive. His son Thomas had died in 1600 and his elder son Edward predeceased him as well in July 1612. As a partial success or consolation, Hertford saw King James grant his elder son Edward a patent in May 1608, to the effect that he and his heirs should become Earls of Hertford on Hertford's death.

If one considers all the evidence it becomes difficult to view the Elvetham entertainment as a spectacle of submission. Hertford was not desperately trying to curry favour with an omnipotent Queen. Surely his main objective was to impress Elizabeth with an extraordinary display of wealth and power in an attempt to prove his sons' suitability as contenders for the succession. In staking this claim on his family's behalf he was simultaneously attempting to restore and augment his honour and rewrite, through the second day's water show in particular, his family history. The Earl's impressive militaristic welcome on the first day might also have been intended and understood as a subtle reminder that his family would not be overlooked in a succession settlement.

¹⁶ CSPD, V, 591ff.

Compared with other progress entertainments, Elvetham was surely one of the highlights, possibly even the climax of the form. The survival of the woodcut of the artificial lake, together with the unprecedented (and never to be repeated) preparations of the Earl of Hertford, have ensured that Elvetham is probably the best known of all progress entertainments. Its most remarkable feature is undoubtedly the magnificent water show, whose sophistication appears to be unique compared to similar English productions.¹⁷

The entertainment text is also a literary contribution of some value in that it was conceived and must be read as an integral whole, rather than a series of individual shows that are only tenuously or not at all connected with each other. The two threads that have been identified and followed (the Hertfords' wealth, honour and prestige on the one hand, the rewriting of the Hertford/Grey family history on the other hand) unify the event. So does the figure of the Poet who functions as a frame by delivering the welcoming as well as the farewell speeches.

The message of the entertainment is loud and clear. Hertford's sons were presented as viable, suitable and worthy candidates for the succession at a time when the succession was still unsettled. The entertainment was intended to restore and augment Hertford's honour in the eyes of the public, amongst his peers, and especially with the Queen by attempting to explain, and thus vindicate, his decision to marry Catherine Grey. That the entertainment was successful in displaying

¹⁷ E.K. Chambers marks Elvetham and Kenilworth as high points in English pageantry, cf. *The English Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), I, pp. 122-4.

Hertford's wealth and power is undeniable, but it failed in its ultimate objective to convince Elizabeth that Hertford's sons would make suitable successors.

IX. THE HAREFIELD ENTERTAINMENT OF JULY 1602

*Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
(A Midsummer Night's Dream, V.i, 36-7)*

The last progress entertainment to be investigated took place in the summer of 1602. Queen Elizabeth's visit to her Lord Keeper Thomas Egerton at his house at Harefield (Middlesex) was the last great country house entertainment of her reign and as such deserves special attention.

The entertainment reflects Egerton's close relationship with the Queen. The entertainment text (such as it is) is full of complimentary rhetoric and expresses Egerton's submissiveness. Its sole purpose seems to be the celebration of the 'beautiful relation' between himself and his monarch. Against the political and biographical backdrop, it becomes clear that Thomas Egerton had no reason, personal, political, or religious, to subvert the Queen, or even to assert himself. His main objective seems to have been the attempt to preserve the *status quo* which definitely favoured him. He wielded considerable power, and to endanger his position by challenging the Queen's authority in any way would have been unwise. Thus he commissioned an entertainment that celebrated the 'beautiful relation' and eschewed the kind of controversial aspects that are potentially underlying the Cowdray as well as the Elvetham entertainments.

IX.1 Sir Thomas Egerton, Career Politician

Considering that Thomas Egerton became a very important figure in the late Elizabethan regime, comparatively little is known about him. He appears as the archetypal *eminence grise*, a man wielding considerable power and pulling the strings but very much in the background, while some of his fellow councillors and politicians, such as the Earl of Essex or Robert Cecil, were much more prominent.

Thomas Egerton was born, probably in 1540, as the illegitimate son of Sir Richard Egerton of Ridley, Cheshire, and one Alice Sparke.¹ Not much is known about his early life, but he soon embarked on a career as a successful lawyer. After this point his career seemed unstoppable. Egerton entered Lincoln's Inn in 1559, was called to the bar in 1572, and subsequently acquired a large practice in the Chancery courts. He became Solicitor-General in June 1581 and Attorney-General eleven years later. He sat as MP for Cheshire in 1584 and 1586. He was knighted at the end of 1593, and also made Chamberlain of Chester.

In his official capacity he conducted the Crown's prosecutions of Campion in 1581, of Davison in 1587, of the Earl of Arundel in 1589, and of Sir John Perrot in 1592. In 1593 Egerton was also promoted to Master of the Rolls, a post he continued to hold until two months after Elizabeth's death. When he took up his new appointment, he vacated his position as Attorney-General, which the Earl of Essex subsequently sought for his protégé Francis Bacon.² In 1595, after Sir John

¹ Biographical information on Egerton can be found in DNB, sub "Egerton, Sir Thomas".

² For a discussion on court politics and careers cf. Natalie Mears, 'Regnum Cecilianum? A Perspective of the Court', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge: Cambridge

Puckering's death, Egerton became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, an office that was revived whenever there was no Lord Chancellor. At the same time he was also made a Privy Councillor.

Egerton recognized the potential of the young Francis Bacon and became his patron. He, like Essex before him, attempted to secure the post of Attorney-General for Bacon in 1606, but he too was unsuccessful in this attempt. The Queen seems to have valued her Lord Keeper highly, and whenever important decisions had to be taken Egerton would be consulted. How important a figure Egerton was within the late Elizabethan regime is reflected in the fact that, during the Queen's final illness, the Lord Keeper was one of the very few councillors granted access, and he was present when Elizabeth was formally asked her to name her successor.

Egerton was also one of the handful of Privy Councillors who witnessed the notorious scene between the Queen and the Earl of Essex in July 1598. Elizabeth had assembled Egerton, Essex, Robert Cecil and the Earl of Nottingham in her Privy Chamber to discuss the appointment of the new Lord Deputy of Ireland.³ The Queen's preferred candidate for the post was Sir William Knollys, Essex's uncle, while Essex himself urged her to appoint Sir George Carew. He disliked Carew and would have happily seen him dispatched to the bogs of Ireland. When the Queen rejected his proposal the Earl angrily turned his back on her. Elizabeth cuffed him for his insolence --he had broken prescribed court etiquette-- and the situation escalated dramatically when Essex instinctively reached for his sword.⁴ Nottingham

University Press, 1995), p. 50-1.

³A description of this episode can be found in Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Fontana, 1992), pp. 518-9.

⁴ William Camden, *History of The Most Renowned and Victorious Princess*

succeeded in diffusing the situation by stepping between them. Essex shouted abuse at the Queen and stormed out of the room.

In the aftermath of that scene Knollys wrote to his nephew, asking him to 'Settle your heart in a right course, your sovereign, your country and God's cause never having more need of you than now. Remember, there is no contesting between sovereignty and obedience'.⁵ Egerton, as the Earl's close friend and fellow councillor, tried to mediate as well, urging Essex to apologize to the Queen: 'The difficulty, my good Lord, is to conquer yourself, which is the height of all true valour and fortitude'. Even if the Queen had given him cause for offence, Egerton argued, 'Policy, duty and religion enforce you to sue, yield and submit to your sovereign', but Essex was not prepared to listen to either man's advice.⁶

Egerton remained Essex's faithful friend until the latter's abortive attempt at rebellion in 1601. While the Earl had been in Ireland in 1599, Egerton had warned him that his policy aroused suspicion and dissatisfaction at home. When Essex finally deserted his troops and returned to Court without leave, he was committed to the custody of Egerton at York House, the Lord Keeper's official London residence, in October 1599. The Queen obviously trusted Egerton to undertake this task faithfully, in spite of his friendship with the Earl.

Elizabeth (London, 1675), p. 555; Edward P. Cheyney, *History of England from the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth*, 2 vols (New York: Longman, 1914, 1926), II, p. 506.

⁵ Quoted in Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Cape, 1998), p. 435.

⁶ Thomas Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth ...* (London: Millar, 1754), II, pp. 385-6; also PRO, SP 12/268/43, Lord Keeper Egerton to Essex, [?] Aug. 1598. In his letter he advises Essex at length to be more conciliatory and return to the Privy Council fold.

Although Essex had been spared a full judicial hearing, the Queen wanted to see him formally censured, especially since it was popularly believed that he had not appeared in Star Chamber because of a lack of 'matter to proceed against him'.⁷ By March 1600 the Earl was allowed to return to Essex House but was still strictly guarded and allowed no visitors except for his wife. Rumours that Essex had been condemned unheard were still rife in London, and public indignation at his unfair treatment was growing. On 5 June therefore, Elizabeth had him brought before a panel of Councillors and leading judges, over which Egerton presided. This tribunal had the power to mete out whatever punishment had been agreed beforehand with the Queen. Essex was told that, although his loyalty was not in question, he was guilty of gross contempt and disobedience. As a consequence, he was dismissed from the Privy Council and deprived of all his offices, allowing him only to retain that of Master of the Horse. His main income now derived from his lease on the custom of sweet wines. The lease ran out in August 1600 and Elizabeth decided not to renew it; instead the revenues reverted to the Crown.

Faced with penury and a political career in ruins, Essex planned a *coup d'etat*. Those of his acquaintances and friends who were more level-headed began to distance themselves from him, but some more unsavoury elements began to flock to Essex House, which attracted the attention of the authorities. On Saturday, 7 February 1601, Essex was summoned by the Council but refused to comply. The following morning Sir William Knollys, Egerton, the Earl of Worcester, and the Lord Chief Justice were sent to Essex's house to fetch him. They were taken hostage

⁷ *Sidney Papers*, 6 vols, ed. William A. Shaw (London: HMSO, 1942), II, p. 169.

by his followers but released later that afternoon. At ten o'clock in the evening the rebellion had foundered and Essex was forced to give himself up.

Although Egerton and Essex had been long-standing friends, the Lord Keeper never seems to have been in any doubt as to where his loyalties lay. He was also intelligent enough not to fall foul of the Queen. In a speech in 1599 he had already criticized 'some wicked and traitorous persons (Monsters of Men) that without regard of dutie or conscience ... [to charge] her Ma^{tie} ... as though, after one and fortie years gov^{mt} and experience, her highness did fayl ... to provide for her dominions and people'.⁸ Even though Egerton did not mention Essex explicitly in his speech, Essex should have taken it as a warning. Other long-term political allies like Lord Buckhurst demanded the Earl's punishment: 'If her Majesty do not make an example thereof in the severity of justis upon such as shal be found principall actors, let her Majesty nowaies perswade herself that she is yet free from danger till that be doon'.⁹ Sir William Knollys, Essex's uncle, expressed a sentiment that Egerton might have subscribed to as well: 'In case of treason, the bonds of loyalty [to the Queen] cause all others to be forgotten.'¹⁰

Egerton was given a prominent role in Essex's trial in February 1601. Like Francis Bacon, who was another old friend of Essex, he was acting for the Crown. While Essex was awaiting execution in the Tower, he requested that Egerton, together with Buckhurst, Nottingham and Cecil, come to see him to hear a full confession.¹¹

⁸ PRO, SP 12/273/37, Speeches in Star Chamber, [28?] Nov. 1599.

⁹ Hatfield House, Cecil MSS, 76/44, Lord Treasurer Buckhurst to Cecil, 9 Feb. 1601.

¹⁰ PRO, SP 12/278/54, Speeches in Star Chamber, 13 Feb. 1601.

¹¹ *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls ...*, 2 vols, ed. Walter B. Devereux (London: Murray, 1853), II, pp. 172, 185.

As time went by, the Queen seems to have trusted Egerton increasingly, and he was given more and more responsibility. He became a key member of the late Elizabethan regime and sat on all special commissions. Like Robert Cecil, he was a career politician, a man who understood statesmanship. After Elizabeth's death Egerton soon established an equally good relationship with James I. Thus, he was reappointed Lord Keeper on 5 April 1603, while James was still in Scotland. On 19 July he received both the new Great Seal from James and was created Baron Ellesmere. Only five days later he was also appointed Lord Chancellor. Egerton proved instrumental in implementing James's policies; among other things, he helped to determine the Act of Union of England and Scotland in 1606 and 1607.

On 7 November 1616 Egerton was granted the title of Viscount Brackley. Due to his failing health he was allowed to retire at the beginning of March 1617, and was promised an earldom for his faithful services. However, he died on 15 March and was buried at Doddleston in Cheshire on 5 April 1617.

Egerton was highly regarded by his contemporaries. His promotion to the post of Lord Keeper in 1596 was conferred on him as a sign of the Queen's favour and appreciation, but the popular verdict seems to have been favourable on the whole as well, as can be seen in a correspondent's remark to the Earl of Essex that 'no man ever came to this dignity with more applause than this worthy gentleman'.¹²

Sir John Davies, who wrote at least part of the Harefield entertainment of 1602, dedicated his poem *Orchestra* to Egerton. Ben Jonson composed three epigrams in

¹² T. Birch, *Memoirs*, II, p. 479.

his honour, Samuel Daniel a verse epistle, and Joshua Sylvester a sonnet. In the decade between 1590 and 1600 alone Egerton received fifteen dedications and a further sixteen during the short remainder of Elizabeth's reign. Only the Queen herself and her favourite, the Earl of Essex, received more.¹³ This fact reflects conclusively that Egerton was perceived to be in a position of power, and his patronage therefore was worth seeking.

Thomas Egerton was married three times. He married first Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Ravenscroft, of Bretton in Flintshire; secondly, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William More of Loseley. In October 1600 Alice, daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, and widow of Ferdinando, fifth Earl of Derby, became his third wife. For a man of humble origins, Egerton had done very well in marrying Alice. The fact that the Dowager Countess of Derby –a title she kept even after her marriage to Egerton-- agreed to marry him, emphasizes his powerful position in late Elizabethan Court society. Alice survived her husband by twenty years and continued to live at their country house at Harefield in Middlesex, where the progress entertainment of 1602 was staged.

¹³ For details of authors and works dedicated to Egerton see Alistair Fox, 'The Decline of Literary Patronage in the 1590s', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. J. Guy, pp. 231, 248-50.

IX.2 Harefield Place

Harefield Place in Middlesex was situated three miles from Uxbridge and eighteen miles from London.¹⁴ The manor had descended by intermarriages and a regular succession in the families of Bacheworth, Swanland, and Newdegate, from the year 1284. There was a brief period of alienation, when John Newdegate exchanged the manor of Harefield with Sir Edmund Anderson, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, for the manor of Arbury in Warwickshire in 1585. In 1601 Sir Edmund sold the estate to Sir Thomas Egerton and his wife Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby.

Detailed information on the house is scant. Harefield Place shares the fate of many Elizabethan houses in that it was either destroyed or (wholly or partially) replaced by a later house. According to one source, Harefield Place was burnt down in 1660; according to another, the house was pulled down.¹⁵ The view of the house included in the third volume of John Nichols's *The Progresses and Public Processions of Elizabeth* shows the building that replaced the original house, and thus is not helpful for our purposes.¹⁶

X.3 The Entertainment Text(s)

Unlike the progress entertainments at Cowdray or Elvetham the Harefield pageant was never published as a whole. Neither the Queen nor her host, it seems, felt the urge to have an account printed and disseminated. There is no narrator to provide us

¹⁴ For a detailed description see John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), III, pp. 581ff.

¹⁵ Ibid., III, p. 581, notes 1, 3.

¹⁶ The illustration of Harefield Place can be found opposite p. 581.

with useful background information or to report and interpret the Queen's reaction to the individual devices.

Harefield is customarily referred to as "fragmentary". This is partly due to the fact that it is not a thematic entertainment like *Elvetham*, for example. No single tale is being told, there are no threads that can be followed in an attempt to interpret the pageant as a whole. Instead, we are confronted with a series of individual episodes that are only tenuously linked. Moreover, these episodes –it is somewhat problematic to speak of an entertainment text in this case– are scattered throughout a diversity of sources. E.K. Chambers lists seven different sources, and McGee's and Meagher's 'Preliminary Checklist' even catalogues nineteen.¹⁷ Finally, we cannot be sure that the "entertainment text" as it is preserved is complete.

Seven episodes survive: (i) a Dialogue between a Bailiff and a Dairymaid to welcome the Queen on her arrival on the estate; (ii) a Dialogue between Time and Place on the steps of the house; (iii) a Poem accompanying the presentation of a robe of rainbows to the Queen on the morning of her departure; (iv) a Farewell Speech by Place dressed in black. There are also (v) the Satyrs' Complaint against the Nymphs; (vi) a Song and Speech by a Mariner, and finally, (vii) a List of Lottery Prizes.¹⁸ While we know when in the course of the entertainment episodes (i) to (iv) were performed, we can only attempt to reconstruct when the other devices took place.

¹⁷ *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), IV, p.68; C.E. McGee and John C. Meagher, 'Preliminary Checklist of Tudor and Stuart Entertainments: 1588-1603', *RORD*, 24 (1981), 148-51.

¹⁸ The numbers refer to Chamber's categorization, they do not reflect the order of performance.

There are two main sources for the entertainment. John Nichols prints the first five items from a transcript of the Newdegate Papers by the Reverend Ralph Churton, dated 1803.¹⁹ Both the transcript and original manuscript were subsequently lost but have recently been found and can now be scrutinized at Warwick County Record Office.²⁰ All later editions of the entertainment seem to have been based on Nichols alone for items (i), (ii) and (iv). Items (iii), (vi) and (vii) were first printed in the second edition of Francis Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* (1608), where they are ascribed to Sir John Davies. Nichols prints his versions of (vi) and (vii) from the second edition of the *Poetical Rhapsody* (1611), together with the incorrect caption 'at the Lord Chancellor's house, 1601'. This incorrect caption led Nichols to believe, wrongly, that those devices formed part of a performance at York House the year prior to the Harefield entertainment.

Robert Krueger, the most recent of Davies's editors, includes items (vi) and (vii) in his edition, together with (iv).²¹ The earliest editor of Davies's work, A.B. Grosart, on the other hand, suggests that the whole of the entertainment is Davies's, a view which Jean Wilson supports: 'As he is certainly the author of parts of it, and was a major figure in the cult of Elizabeth I towards the end of her reign, this conjecture seems plausible.'²² Certainly items (vi) and (vii) seems to be by Davies. In the 1608 edition of the *Poetical Rhapsody* they appear between two of Davies's poems, and

¹⁹ *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, III, pp. 586-95.

²⁰ Newdegate Papers: Manuscript, C.R. 136/B 2455; Churton transcript, C.R. 136/B 3440-3521; one separate sheet with the Satyrs' complaint, C.R. 136/B 2452.

²¹ *The Poems of Sir John Davies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

²² *The Works in Verse and Prose of Sir John Davies*, ed. A.B. Grosart, 3 vols (1869-76), II, pp. 172ff; Jean Wilson, 'The Harefield Entertainment and the Cult of Elizabeth I, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 66 (1986), 319.

they are labelled 'I.D.' Item (iv) 'Beauty's rose and virtue's book' is remarkably similar to other works by Davies, as Krueger has pointed out. Its first line is echoed almost verbatim in line 220 of Davies's 'Contention between a Wife, a Widowe, and a Maide' (the line reads 'Beauties fresh rose and virtues living booke'), which was written for another entertainment later in 1602.²³

Fortunately, the accounts of the Harefield entertainment have survived. They give us an idea of the huge costs involved --the three-day entertainment came to £1260.12s.4d.-- and extensive preparations that had to be made even for a short visit by the Queen. In the absence of a substantial body of comparative evidence this material is very important. However, the accounts are partly of dubious value because John Payne Collier, the nineteenth-century editor of the Egerton Papers, attempted to "improve" them. Thus, Collier made out that Burbage's company had performed *Othello* during the Queen's stay at Harefield and been paid £10 for their efforts. Equally dubious is the information that a payment was made to 'M^r Lillyes man, which brought the lotterye boxe to Harefield' (according to the accounts, he received £64.18s.10d).²⁴ This reference to Lyly led Warwick Bond to believe that the entertainment was devised by that author rather than by Davies.²⁵

On a more mundane level, however, the accounts can probably be trusted. We are told that, as at Elvetham, new ovens had to be built for the Queen's visit (48,000

²³ *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, p. 410. The later entertainment mentioned was Robert Cecil's at his London house on 6 December 1602.

²⁴ *The Egerton Papers*, ed. John Payne Collier (London: Camden Society 12, 1840), p. 343. On the forgeries see E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, pp. 67-68.

²⁵ *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), I, pp. 491ff.

bricks were bought) and some alterations had to be made to the house: carpenters, joiners, bricklayers and other workmen, totalling 121 people in all, received payment for their labour. Luckily for Egerton, his neighbours helped him with the hospitality by donating a large number of gifts of food. These ranged from luxury items such as stags, lobsters, oysters, pheasants, quails and swans to more everyday food such as fruit, marmalade and sugarloaves. This show of neighbourly solidarity recalls the reference in *To Penshurst* to 'the countrey' coming 'with all their zeale, to warme [King James's] welcome here'.²⁶

The text that will form the basis of this examination of the Harefield entertainment is a collation of my own transcript of the Newdegate manuscript for items (i), (ii), (iii) and (v), and Nichols's printed version of the Churton transcript. When closely comparing Nichols's printed version and the original manuscript, a number of inaccuracies were found which I have attempted to rectify. Mainly, these were omissions of words, or words missing in the manuscript had been silently inserted. In item (ii), the dialogue between Place and Time, Nichols rearranged the order of a section of the exchange so that it would make greater logical sense. In my transcript the original order has been left intact. Spelling and punctuation have been modernized throughout to facilitate reading.

²⁶ Don E. Wayne, *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (London: Methuen, 1984), ll. 80-1 (p. xv).

IX.4 An Introduction to the Entertainment

Harefield, like Bisham or Ditchley, is set in the world of pastoral romance. But instead of Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses, or the nymphs, fairies and classical gods of the Elvetham entertainment, at Harefield the Queen is welcomed by a bailiff and a dairymaid. These are more homely characters, just as the whole entertainment has a more cosy, intimate feel than most other country house welcomes. The world of Harefield is that of the 'domesticated' or 'tamed pastoral', as Jean Wilson has described it.²⁷ The first people Elizabeth meets are farmers, who offer her the modest pleasures of the estate, dairy products and a variety of fruit. As was customary on these occasions, the Queen was given a welcoming present, in this case two jewels in the shape of a rake and a fork. Although the jewels were probably highly unusual, they too represent simple domesticity.

When the Queen moved on to the house she encountered the figures of Time and Place, who are discussing how they are going to entertain her. Even the dialogue between these two allegorical characters is essentially a straightforward compliment to the Queen.

The short 'Complaint of the Satyrs against the Nymphs' recalls other shows that have classical pastoral deities among their *dramatis personae*, but here the episode is oddly off key, almost out of place. With the Mariner's Lottery the entertainment returns to more homespun delights. The Queen and each of the Ladies accompanying her were encouraged to draw a fortune. The individual lots came

²⁷ Cf. 'The Harefield Entertainment', 326.

with a rhyming couplet each, and although the lottery is a charming idea, the gifts that the ladies receive are mostly trinkets, more often than not taken from the domestic sphere, such as a looking glass, a handkerchief, and a cushionet. One manuscript mentions four additional lots, three of which were to be drawn by country wenches, which underlines the homely character of the lottery.²⁸

Prior to her departure three days later Elizabeth was given another present, the 'robe of rainbows'.²⁹ The presentation of this gown was accompanied by verses that duly complimented the Queen and explained the relevance of the rainbow robe. Finally, Place lamented Elizabeth's departure, this time dressed in black to express her mourning.

As mentioned above, we know when four of the episodes were performed during the entertainment. The manuscript headings help us place them fairly precisely. A reconstruction of the timetable of events has been attempted by both Jean Wilson and Mary Erler and a brief summary will suffice here.³⁰ The Queen arrived on Saturday, 31 July 1602, probably in the late afternoon or early evening, as was her wont on these occasions. As soon as she had left the highway and turned into the 'demesne grounds' she was greeted by a Bailiff and a Dairymaid. A little later Elizabeth reached the manor house on whose steps she was met by the figures of Place and Time. This seems to have been a twilight scene, either because it was

²⁸ Contemporary MS. (dated 1602) printed as 'Poetical Miscellanies', in *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages*, ed. J.O. Halliwell (London: Percy Society 15, 1845), pp. 5-10.

²⁹ Possible connections with the so-called "Rainbow Portrait" of the Queen will be discussed in the next section.

³⁰ 'The Harefield Entertainment', 327; Mary C. Erler, 'Sir John Davies and the Rainbow Portrait', *MP*, 84 (1987), 361-2.

murky and raining (the Queen who was on horseback had to seek shelter under a tree to listen to the first speech, we are told) or because it was getting dark (in his speech Time refers to the sun having just disappeared behind a hill). What, if anything, took place that evening we do not know. Wilson assumes that the complaint of the Satyrs was performed, while Erler suggests that it was the Mariner's song, speech and the lottery. An evening meal would have rounded off the first day.

The events of Sunday, 1 August, are unknown. Wilson proposes that part of the day would have been devoted to the observation of religion. This might well have been the case because the Queen was known to attend church services on Sundays whenever possible, even while on progress (Kenilworth 1575). On other occasions, the Sunday was enjoyed as a day of rest, as at Cowdray in 1591. In Wilson's reconstruction, the Mariner's song, speech and lottery were performed on Sunday evening.

On Monday morning the Queen left, probably after breakfast. Prior to her departure she received the gift of the robe of rainbows³¹ and then listened to a farewell speech by Place which concluded the entertainment. We cannot be certain when the complaint of the Satyrs or the Mariner's contribution were staged, but it seems not really to make a difference to the entertainment, as I understand it.

³¹ The Newdegate MS. reads 'The humble petition of a guiltless Lady, delivered in writing on Monday morning, when the [robe] of rainbows was presented to the Queen'.

Compared to the two progress entertainments discussed before, Harefield seems surprisingly straightforward. It celebrates primarily the 'beautiful relation' between the Queen and her host, and between Court and country that are not yet diametrically opposed at Harefield. Existing hierarchies are being reinforced by suggesting that the needs, interests and behaviour of the different classes are harmonized through the person of the Queen. The lottery in particular epitomizes this mingling of levels, as Mary Erler has pointed out. Elizabeth naturally drew the first lot, followed by the ladies of the Court, some neighbours of the Egertons, and finally some country wenches were allowed to participate.³²

As far as can be ascertained, Thomas Egerton was a devoted subject to his Queen and loyal to the Elizabethan regime, of which he became a leading member in the last decade or so of the reign. As a politician he was sufficiently level-headed to overlook his friendship with the Earl of Essex when the latter tried to overturn the power structures and subvert the succession. Egerton was also pragmatic enough to ask the Queen to appoint her successor when she lay dying, and he was enough of a politically astute opportunist to ride out to meet King James when he came to England.

Egerton knew that he needed to retain the Queen's favour and was prepared to flatter and entertain her lavishly, if that was what it took. She had raised him to a powerful position within her government and he was aware that he owed her something in return. Although Elizabeth did not go and see him as often as Lord Burghley, for example, she visited him quite regularly once he had come to

³² 'Sir John Davies and the Rainbow Portrait', 371.

prominence in her inner circle of politicians. In 1598 the Queen stayed at Egerton's house in Kew where, similar to Harefield, she was showered with expensive presents. On her arrival, the Queen received 'a fine fan' with a diamond handle. A little later she was given a nosegay that had nestling in it 'a very rich jewel', worth at least £400. After dinner Egerton presented her with a pair of virginals and a costly gown.³³ The year prior to the Harefield entertainment Elizabeth had also visited her Lord Keeper briefly at his London residence. That same year Egerton acquired the house at Harefield, and when Elizabeth embarked on her annual progress in the summer of 1602, Harefield was one of the places she decided to visit.

³³ *Sidney Papers*, I, 376.

X. THE HAREFIELD ENTERTAINMENT -- A TRANSCRIPTION OF THE TEXT

The following is a transcript of the Harefield entertainment using the Newdegate manuscripts (C.R. 136/ B 2455 and C.R. 136/ B2454) in Warwick County Record Office as copy texts. For items (vi), the Mariner's Song and Speech, and (vii), the Lottery, the text as printed in Francis Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* (1608) served as a copy text. Alternative readings will be denoted in footnotes. Spelling and punctuation have been modernized throughout to facilitate reading.

Entertainment of Q[ueen] Elizabeth at Harefield, by the Countess of Derby

(i)

After the Queen entered (out of the highway) into the demesne ground of Harefield, near the dairy house, she was met with two persons, the one representing a Bailiff, the other a Dairymaid, with the Speech. Her Majesty, being on horseback, stayed under a tree (because it rained) to hear it.

B(ailiff). Why, how now, Joan. Are you here? God's my life, what make you here, gadding and gazing after this manner? You come to buy gapeseed, do you? Wherefore come you abroad now, *i'* faith¹, can you tell?

J(oan). I come abroad to welcome these Strangers.

B. Strangers? How knew you there would come Strangers?

J. All this night I could not sleep, dreaming of green rushes; and yesternight the chatting of the pies, and the chirking of the friskets², did foretell as much; and, besides that, all this day [my]³ left ear glowed, and that [is] to me (let them

¹ This reading is suggested by Churton; cf. John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), III, p. 586.

² Probably 'crickets'.

³ Square brackets denote the omission of a word or words in the manuscript.

all say what they will) always a sign of strangers, if it be in summer; marry, if it be in the winter, 'tis a sign of anger. But what makes you in this company, I pray you?

B. I make the way for these Strangers, which the way-maker himself could not do; for it is a way was never passed before. Besides, the M[ist]r[es]s of this fair company, though she know the way to all men's hearts, yet she knows the way but to few men's houses, except she love them very well, I can tell you; and therefore I myself, without any commission, have taken [it] upon me to conduct them to⁴ the house.

J. The house? Which house? Do you remember yourself? Which way go you?

B. I go this way, on the right hand. Which way should I go?

J. You say true, and you're a trim man; but, in faith, I'll talk more to you, except you were wiser. I pray you heartily, forsooth, come near the house, and take a simple lodging with us tonight; for I can assure you that yonder house that he talks of is but a pigeon-house, which is very little if it were finished, and yet very little of [it] is finished. And you will believe me, upon my life, Lady, I saw carpenters and bricklayers and other workmen about it within less than these two hours. Besides, I doubt my M[aste]r and M[ist]r[es]s are not at home: or if they be, you must make your own provision, for they have no provision for such Strangers. You should seem to be Ladies; and we in the country have an old saying that 'half a piece a day will serve a lady'. I know not what you are, neither am I acquainted with your diet; but, if you will go with me, you shall have cheer for a Lady: for first you shall have a dainty syllabub; next a mess⁵ of clotted cream; stroakings⁶, in good faith, red cow's milk, and they say in London that's restorative: you shall have green cheeses⁷ and cream. (I'll speak a bold word) if the Queen herself (God save her Grace) [were here], she might be seen to eat of it. We will not greatly brag of our possets, but we would be loath to learn to praise: and if you love fruit, forsooth, we have jennetings, pearmains, russet coats, pippins, able-johns⁸, and perhaps a pearplum, a damson,

⁴ MS. has 'them to' twice, possibly an error made while copying.

⁵ Probably 'a dish'.

⁶ The last milk drawn from a cow.

⁷ Very new cheese.

⁸ Probably 'apple-Johns', a variety of apple considered to be in perfection when shrivelled and withered (Cf. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary). All the others are varieties of apples.

aye, or an apricocke too, but that they are no dainties this year; and therefore, I pray, come near the house, and welcome heartily do so.

B. Go to, gossip, your tongue must be running. If my M[ist]r[es]s should hear of this, in faith she would give you little thanks, I can tell you, for offering to draw so fair a flight from her pigeon-house (as you call it) to your dairy house.

J. Wisely, wisely, brother Richard; in faith as I would use the matter, I daresay she would give me great thanks: for you know my M[ist]r[es]s charged me earnestly to retain all idle harvest folk that passed this way; and my meaning was, that, if I could hold them all this night and tomorrow, on Monday morning to carry them into the fields, and to make them earn their entertainment well and thriftily; and to that end I have here a Rake and a Fork⁹, to deliver to the best Housewife in this company.

B. Do so then: deliver them to [the] best Housewife in all this company; for we shall have as much use of her pains and patience there as here. As for the dainties that you talk of, if you have any such, you shall do well to send them; and as for these Strangers, set thy heart at rest, Joan; they will not rest with [thee] this night, but will pass on to my M[aste]r[']s house.

J. Then, I pray take this Rake and Fork with you; but I am ashamed, and woe to my heart, you should go away so late. And I pray God you repent you not, and wish yourselves here again, when you find you have gone further and fared worse.

⁹ MS. has a note in the margin, describing them as '2 juells'.

(ii)

When Her Majesty was alighted from her horse, and ascended three steps near to the entering into the house, a carpet and chair there set for her; Place and Time present themselves, and used this dialogue.¹⁰

Place in a parti-coloured robe, like the brick house.

Time with yellow hair, and in a green robe, with a[n] hour glass, stopped, not running.

P. Welcome, good Time.

T. Godden¹¹, my little pretty private Place.

P. Farewell, goodbye¹² Time; are you not gone? Do you stay here? I wonder that Time should stay anywhere; what's the cause?

T. If thou knewest the cause, thou wouldst not wonder; for I stay to entertain the wonder of this time; wherein I would pray thee to join¹³ me, if thou wert not too little for her greatness; for it were as great a miracle for thee to receive her, as to see the Ocean shut up in a creek, or the circumference shrink unto the point of the centre.

P. Too little! I have all this day entertained the Sun, which, you know, is a great and glorious guest; he's but even now gone down yonder hill. And now he is gone, methinks, if Cynthia herself would come in his place, the place that contained him should not be too little to receive her.

T. You say true, and I like your comparison; for the guest that we are to entertain does fill all places with her divine virtues, as the Sun fills the world with the light of his beams. But say, poor Place, in what manner didst thou entertain the Sun?

P. Too little! By that reason she should rest in no place, for no place is great enough to receive her.

T. Well, well; this is no time for us to entertain one another, when we should join to entertain her.

¹⁰ Nichols rearranged a section of the dialogue so that it makes greater logical sense. The dialogue transcribed here is as in the MS.

¹¹ Dialect variant of 'Good-ev(e)n', i.e. 'Good evening'.

¹² Alternatively, 'God (Good) be with you.'

¹³ MS. reads 'ioyne with'.

P. I received his glory, and was filled with it: but, I must confess, not according to the proportion of his greatness, but according to the measure of my capacity; his bright face (methought) was all day turned upon me; nevertheless his beams in infinite abundance were dispersed and spread upon other places.

T. Our entertainment of this Goddess will be much alike; for though herself shall eclipse her so much, as to suffer her brightness to be shadowed in this obscure and narrow Place, yet the sun beams that follow her, the train I mean that attends upon her, must, by the necessity of this Place, be divided from her. Are you ready, Place? Time is ready.

P. So it should seem indeed, you are so gay, fresh, and cheerful. You are the present Time, are you not? Then what need you make such haste? Let me see, your wings are clipped, and, for aught I see, your hourglass runs not.

T. My wings are clipped indeed, and it is her hands has clipped them; and, 'tis true, my glass runs not: indeed it has been stopped a long time; it can never run as long as I wait upon this M[ist]r[es]s. I [am] her Time; and Time were very ungrateful, if it should not ever stand still, to serve and preserve, cherish and delight her, that is the glory of her time, and makes the Time happy wherein she lives.

P. And does she not make Place happy as well as Time? What if it she make thee a continual holiday, she makes me a perpetual sanctuary. Does not the presence of a Prince make a cottage a court, and the presence of the Gods make every place Heaven? But, alas, my littleness is not capable of that happiness that her great grace would impart unto me: but, were I as large as their hearts that are mine Owners, I should be the fairest Palace in the world; and were I agreeable to the wishes of their hearts, I should in some measure resemble her sacred self, and be in the outward front exceeding fair, and in the inward furniture exceeding rich.

T. In good time do you remember the hearts of your Owners; for, as I was passing to this place, I found this Heart¹⁴, which as my daughter Truth told me, was stolen by one of the Nymphs from one of the servants of this Goddess; but her guilty conscience informing her that it did belong only of right unto her that is M[ist]r[es]s of all hearts in the world, she cast [it] fro[m] her for this time: and Opportunity, finding it, delivered it unto her as a pledge and mirror of their hearts that owe thee.

¹⁴ 'A Diamond', note in the margin of MS.

P. It is a mirror indeed, for so it is transparent. It is a clear heart, you may see through it. It has no close corners, no darkness, no unbeautiful spot in it. I will therefore presume the more boldly to deliver it; with this assurance, that Time, Place, Persons, and all other circumstances, do concur altogether in bidding her welcome.

(iii)

**The humble Petition of a guiltless Lady, delivered in writing Monday morning,
when the [robe] of rainbows was presented to the Q[ueen] by the La[dy]
Walsingham**

Beauty's rose and Virtue's book,
Angels' mind and angel's look,
To all saints and angels dear,
Clearest Majesty on earth,
Heaven did smile at your fair birth,
And since your days have been most clear.

Only poor St. Swithin now
Does hear you blame his cloudy brow;
But that poor saint devoutly swears,
It is but a tradition vain
That his much weeping causes rain
For saints in heaven shed no tears.

But this he says, that to his feast
Comes Iris, an unbidden guest
In her moist robe of colours gay;
And she comes, she ever stays

For the space of forty days,
And more or less rains every day.

But the good saint, when once he knew
This rain was like to fall on you,
If saint could weep, he had wept as much
As when he did the lady lead
That did on burning iron tread,
To Ladies his respect is such.

He gently first bids Iris go
Unto the Antipodes below,
But she for that more sullen grew.
When he saw that, with angry look,
From her her rainy robe he took,
Which here he does present to you.

It is fit it should with you remain,
For you know better how to rain.
Yet if it rain still as before,
St. Swithin prays that you would guess
That Iris does more robes possess,
And that you should blame him no more.

(iv)

At Her Majesty's departure from Harefield, Place, attired in black mourning apparel, used this farewell following:

Sweet Majesty, be pleased to look upon a poor mourning widow before your Grace. I am this Place, which at your coming was full of joy, but now at your departure am as full of sorrow. I was then, for my comfort, accompanied with the present cheerful Time; but now he is to depart with you; and, blessed as he is, must ever fly before you. But alas, I have no wings, as Time has. My heaviness is such that I must stand still, amazed to see so great happiness so soon bereft me. Oh, that I could remove with you, as other circumstances can. Time can go with you, Persons can go with you; they can move like Heaven; but I, dull Earth (as I am indeed), must stand unmoveable. I could wish myself like the enchanted Castle of Love, to hold you here for ever, but that your virtues would dissolve all my enchantment. Then what remedy? As it is against the nature of an angel to be circumscribed in Place, so [it is] against the nature of Place to have the motion of an angel. I must stay forsaken and desolate. You may go with majesty, joy, and glory. My only suit, before you go, is that you will pardon the close imprisonment which you have suffered ever since your coming, imputing it not to me, but St. Swithin, who of late has raised so many storms, as I was fain to provide this Anchor¹⁵ for you, when I did understand you would put into this creek. But now, since I perceive this harbour too little for you, and you will hoist sail and be gone, I beseech you take this Anchor with you. And I pray to Him that made both Time and Place, that, in all places, wherever you shall arrive, you may anchor as safely, as you do and ever shall do in the hearts of my Owners.

¹⁵ MS. explains 'A Jewel'.

(v)

The Complaint of the Five¹⁶ Satyrs Against The Nymphs

Tell me, O Nymphs, why do you
Shun us that your loves pursue?
What do the Satyrs' notes retain
That should merit your disdain?

On our brows if horns do grow,
Was not Bacchus armed so?
Yet of him the Candean maid
Held no scorn, nor was afraid.¹⁷

Say our colours tawny be,
Phoebus was not fair to see;
Yet fair Clymen did not shun
To be the mother of his son.

If our beards be rough and long,
So had Hercules the strong;
Yet Deianeira, with many a kiss,
Joined her tender lips to his.

If our bodies hairy be,
Mars as rugged was as we;
Yet did Ilia think her grac'd,
For to be by Mars embrac'd.

Say our feet ill-favoured are,
Cripples' legs are worse by far;

¹⁶ This is written as a 'V', like the Roman number five.

¹⁷ The Satyrs cite here, and in the following verses, examples of famous lovers from classical mythology.

Yet fair Venus, during life,
Was the lumping Vulcan's wife.

Briefly, if by nature we
But imperfect creatures be,
Think not our defects so much,
Since celestial powers be such.

But you Nymphs, whose venal love
Love of gold alone doth move,
Though you scorn us, yet for gold
Your base love is bought and sold.

(vi)

A Lottery¹⁸

A Mariner with a box under his arm, containing all the several things following, supposed to come from the Carrick¹⁹, came into the presence, singing this Song:

Cynthia, Queen of seas and lands,
That Fortune everywhere commands,
Sent forth Fortune to the sea
To try her Fortune every way.
There did I Fortune meet, which makes me now to sing,
There is no fishing in the sea, nor service to the king.

All the nymphs of Thetis' train
Did Cynthia's Fortune entertain;

¹⁸ In Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* this episode has the incorrect caption 'Presented before the Queen's Majesty at the Lord Chancellor's House, 1601'.

¹⁹ Probably a 'carrack', a large ship of burden, which was also fitted for fighting (Cf. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary).

Many a jewel, many a gem,
 Was to her Fortune brought by them.
 Her Fortune sped so well, as makes me now to sing,
 There's no fishing in the sea, nor service to the king.

Fortune, that it might be seen
 That she did serve a royal Queen,
 A frank and royal hand did bear,
 And cast her favours everywhere.
 Some toys fell to my share, which makes me now to sing,
 There's no fishing in the sea, nor service to the king.

And the Song ended, he uttered this short speech:

God save you, fair Ladies all; and for my part, if ever I be brought to answer for my sins, God forgive me my sharking, and lay usury to my charge. I am a Mariner, and am now come from the sea, where I had the fortune to light upon these few trifles. I must confess, I came but lightly by them; but I no sooner had them, but I made a vow that as they came to my hands by Fortune, so I would not part with them but by Fortune. To that end I have ever since carried these lots about me, that, if I met with fit company, I might divide my booty among them. And now, I thank my good fortune! I am lighted into the best company of the world, a company of the fairest Ladies that ever I saw. Come Ladies, try your fortunes; and if any light upon an unfortunate blank, let her think that fortune does but mock her in these trifles, and means to pleasure her in greater matters.

(vii)

The Lots

i. Fortune's Wheels

Fortune must now no more on triumph ride;
The wheels are yours that did her chariot guide.

ii. A Purse

You thrive, or would, or may; your lot's a Purse,
Fill it with gold, and you are never the worse.

iii. A Mask

Want you a Mask? Here Fortune gives you one,
Yet Nature gives the rose and lily none.

iv. A Looking Glass

Blind Fortune does not see how fair you be,
But gives a Glass, that you yourself may see.

v. A Handkerchief

Whether you seem to weep, or weep indeed,
This Handkerchief will stand you well in steed.²⁰

vi. A Plain Ring

Fortune does send you, hap it well or ill,
This plain gold Ring, to wed you to your will.

vii. A Ring, with this poesy: *'As faithful as I find'*

Your hand by Fortune on this Ring does light,
And yet the words do fit²¹ your humour right.

²⁰ Form of 'stead'.

²¹ The *Poetical Rhapsody* prints 'hit' for 'fit'.

viii. A Pair of Gloves

Fortune these Gloves to you in challenge sends,
For that you love not fools that are her friends.

ix. A Dozen of Points²²

You are in ev'ry point a lover true,
And therefore Fortune gives the Points to you.

x. A Lace

Give her the Lace, that loves to be straight-laced,
So Fortune's little gift is aptly placed.

xi. A Pair of Knives

Fortune does give this pair of Knives to you,
To cut the thread of love, if it be not true.

xii. A Girdle

By Fortune's Girdle you may happy be,
But they that are less happy, are more free.

xiii. A Pair of Writing Tables

These Tables may contain your thoughts in part,
But write not all that's written in your heart.

xiv. A Pair of Garters

Though you have Fortune's Garters, you must be
More staid and constant in [your] steps than she.

xv. A Coif and Cross-Cloth

Frown in good earnest, or be sick in jest,
This Coif and Cross-Cloth will become you best.

²² 'Lace made with a needle' (Cf. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary).

xvi. A Scarf

Take you a Scarf, bind Cupid hand and foot;
So Love must ask you leave, before he shoot.

xvii. A Falling Band²³

Fortune would have you rise, yet guides your hand
From other lots to take the Falling Band.

xviii. A Stomacher

This Stomacher is full of windows wrought,
Yet none through them can see into your thought.

xix. A Pair of Scissors

These Scissors do your housewifery bewray,
You love to work, though you were born to play.

xx. A Chain

Because you scorn Love's captive to remain,
Fortune has sworn to lead you in Chain.

xxi. A Prayer Book

Your fortune may prove good another day;
Till Fortune come, take you a Book to pray.

xxii. A Snuffkin²⁴

'Tis summer, yet a Snuffkin is your lot.
But 'twill be winter one day, doubt you not.

²³ The neck-band or collar of a shirt, also the collar or ruff worn in the 17th century, termed a falling-band when turned down (Cf. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary).

²⁴ A muff.

xxiii. A Fan

You love to see, and yet to be unseen;
Take you this Fan to be your beauty's screen.

xxiv. A Pair of Bracelets

Lady, your hands are fallen into a snare,
For Cupid's manacles these Bracelets are.

xxv. A Bodkin

Even with this Bodkin you may live unharmed,
Your beauty is with virtue so well armed.

xxvi. A Necklace

Fortune gives your fair neck this Lace to wear;
God grant a heavier yoke it never bear.

xxvii. A Cushionet

To her that little cares what lot she wins,
Chance gives a little Cushionet to stick pins.

xxviii. A Dial

The Dial's yours; watch time, lest it be lost;
Yet they most lose it that do watch it most.

xxix. A Nutmeg, With A Blank Parchment In It

This Nutmeg holds a blank, but Chance does hide it;
Write your own wish, and Fortune will provide it.

xxx. A Blank

Wot you not why Fortune gives you no prize?
Good faith, she saw you not, she wants her eyes.

xxx. A Blank

You are so dainty to be pleased, God wot,
Chance knows not what to give you for a lot.

xxxii. A Blank

'Tis pity such a hand should draw in vain;
Though it gain naught, yet shall it pity gain.

xxxiii. A Blank

Nothing's your lot, that's more than can be told,
For nothing is more precious than gold.

xxxiv. A Blank

You fain would have, but what you cannot tell.
In giving nothing Fortune serves you well.

I.D.²⁵

The Percy transcript leaves out lots 22 and 24, but adds the following four lots instead:

A country wench. A Pair of shears

You whisper many tales in many ears,
To clip your tongue your lot's a pair of shears.

A country wench. An Apron

You love to make excuses for all things,
An apron is your lot, which has no strings.

²⁵ Probably the initials of Sir John Davies, who wrote this part of the entertainment, possibly all of it.

A country wench. A reel
You are high in the instep, short in the heel,
Your head is giddy, your lot is a reel.

No name. A blank
Fortune is bountiful, and from his store
Gives you as much as you were worth before.

XI. THE ENTERTAINMENT AS AN EVENT

Play the humble host
(*Macbeth*, III.iv.4)

In literary terms, the Harefield entertainment is a comparatively minor effort, which is probably one of the reasons why it has received little critical attention. It is pastoral in character with most of the usual trimmings, but lacks the complexity of Cowdray and Elvetham, or even other pastoral entertainments such as Sudeley (1592). Instead, it employs some more unusual variations on well-known themes from previous entertainments.

When Elizabeth first entered the Egertons' Middlesex estate she was met by a Bailiff and a Dairymaid. These are more homely characters than the poets, porters, pilgrims or wild men the Queen usually encountered on these occasions, and they set the tone for the entertainment. Immediately we know that Harefield is not going to be peopled with Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses or pagan divinities, and neither is a statement of power on the host's part being made. The pageant will be rather more informal and intimate than comparable visits. This may be explained by the fact that, by 1602, Egerton had become a top-ranking Court official who was necessarily close to the Queen. She visited him in London on several occasions, they exchanged New Year's gifts, and presumably worked together on a daily basis on government policy. Apparently, he had no need to put on an overwhelming spectacle because he was not trying to win any special favours or preferment. His main objective seems to have been to consolidate his position at Court and in the Queen's

esteem. Therefore, he organized a pageant that would simultaneously please and entertain the Queen and reinforce the bond of reciprocal devotion.

The first encounter between the Queen and the Bailiff and Dairymaid is fairly typical in that the meeting is supposed to be fortuitous and the characters pretend not to recognize Elizabeth. This may also partly explain why the dialogue reads, not so much as an official greeting, but as a conversation between the two rustics about the 'strangers' who have just arrived. Usually, the other characters swiftly realize that they are in the presence of their Queen and do homage to her. Here the pretence is kept up throughout, which makes for an attractive combination of delicate comedy and royal compliment. Joan, the dairymaid, surmises 'You seem to be Ladies' and honestly admits 'I know not what you are'. She mentions that her master and mistress are probably not at home, but even if they were, the guests would have to make their own arrangements because there are will not be sufficient provisions for all of them. The accounts, of course, tell a very different story: 86 stags and bucks, 11 oxen, 65 sheep, innumerable birds, fish, oysters, sweets and different fruits were donated by the Egertons' neighbours to feed the Court.

Joan suggests that Elizabeth spend the night in the dairy house with her rather than in the great house, because the manor house is not yet 'finished'. It was only two hours ago that the builders left, she tells us. This remark once more underlines the supposedly unexpected nature of a royal visit and also hints at what must have been frantic preparations within a household, once a royal visit had been confirmed. At the same time, it is apologetic in nature, should the accommodation prove inadequate in any respect. Egerton had only purchased the house the year before and

presumably had not had much time to have it altered or improved for a royal visit. If Elizabeth were to spend the night in the dairy house she could partake of the simple luxuries that the estate has to offer: a variety of fruits and dairy products such as milk, cream and cheeses which come highly recommended: 'if the Queen herself (God save her Grace) [were here], she might be seen to eat of it.' Here, like in the rest of this dialogue, gentle dramatic irony is used.

Almost immediately, however, we find out that Joan's offer of hospitality has a catch. Candidly she admits that she was hoping to delay the strangers' departure until Monday morning when she will 'carry them into the fields; and to make them earn their entertainment well and thriftily; and to that end I have here a rake and fork, to deliver to the best housewife in all this company.' At this point Joan hands the Queen two jewels, presumably in the shape of a rake and fork. These are unusual welcoming presents indeed, and the "good housewife" is another addition to the many personae in which the Queen was traditionally celebrated. Jean Wilson has pointed out an interesting parallel to a passage in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where the Fairies are sent about their duties:

Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap;
Where fires thou findest unraked, and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry;
Our radiant Queen hates sluts and sluttery.

...

Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out;
Strew good luck, ouches, on every sacred room;
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome, as in state 'tis fit;
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.¹

¹ V.v.41-5, 54-8. Wilson also points out that Sir John Harington, Elizabeth's godson, had referred to the Queen as the 'best housewife in England'; cf. 'The Harefield Entertainment and the Cult of Elizabeth I, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 66 (1986), 328, n.46.

Shakespeare's play transforms the Court into a domestic scene: the Queen's maids of honour become household maids who do the manual labour. Just as the housewife trains her maids in the art of housewifery in exchange for the girls' work, the Queen took young girls into her household. The understanding was that these maids of honour would finish their education at Court in exchange for performing simple domestic tasks such as dressing the Queen, and Elizabeth --*in loco parentis*-- would find suitable husbands for them. The vision of the good housewife, who rules supreme over all her household servants, may transfer the Queen's power into the domestic sphere, but it is nonetheless a position of power.² Elizabeth would have appreciated this allusion because she prided herself on looking after her people, assuring their prosperity, and defending them from outside enemies, just like a good housewife would look after her household.³

To have the Queen accosted by a dairymaid seems somewhat unusual, but this juxtaposition was not without precedent. Elizabeth herself had created the image of the humble milkmaid well before she came to the throne. Holinshed reports an incident that took place while Elizabeth was kept under house arrest at Woodstock in 1554-5:

Thus this woorthie ladie oppressed with continuall sorrow, could not be permitted to have recourse to anie friends she had; but still in the hands of hir enemies was left desolate, and utterly destitute of all that might refresh a dolefull hart ... hearing upon a time out of hir garden at Woodstocke, a certeine milkmaid singing pleasantlie, wished hir selfe to be a milkmaid as she was,

² Cf. Jean Wilson, 'The Harefield Entertainment', 321-2.

³ There are numerous examples of this kind of self-portrayal. Cf. the Queen's "Golden Speech" on 30 November 1601, parts of which are printed in Maria Perry, *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), pp. 232-3.

saieng that hir case was better, and life more merier that was hers in that state she was.⁴

This episode may be apocryphal, but it is instructive. The imprisoned princess compares herself to a milkmaid: from her point of view, the state of the powerless, hard-working peasant is infinitely preferable to her own situation. Later Elizabeth was to use pastoral forms as an instrument of policy. In her 1576 speech to Parliament, which was the response to yet another urgent plea to get married, Elizabeth said 'If I were a milkmaid with a pail on my arm, whereby my private person might be little set by, I would not forsake that poor state [i.e. virginity] to match with the greatest monarch.'⁵ The political point of this analogy is that she was not a milkmaid, not merely a private person. Whatever she chose to do would affect the country as a whole. This point was reiterated and reinforced in a later Parliamentary speech that set out to justify the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. She would pardon Mary, so Elizabeth claims, if she truly repented and if they both 'were but as two milk-maids, with pails upon our arms; or that there were no more dependency upon us, but mine own life were only in danger, and not the whole estate of your religion and well doings'.⁶ In all these instances, an idealized view of the dairymaid's life is conjured up as a desired alternative to the *status quo* but, more importantly, as a foil for the exercise of power.

With the persona of the dairymaid the pageant returns to imagery that the Queen had chosen herself and employed at crucial times in the past. Egerton thus displayed his

⁴ *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols (London: Johnson, 1807-8), IV, p. 133.

⁵ Quoted in John E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1559-1581* (London: Cape, 1953), I, p. 366.

⁶ J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth and Her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London: Cape, 1957), II, p. 117.

familiarity with the way Elizabeth liked to see herself portrayed, which served to underline his closeness to her. Through the figure of Joan we catch a glimpse of the ideal pastoral world whose bounties reflect the Queen's successful reign. The fact that this is very much an idealized, not very truthful, version of the last decade of Elizabeth's reign suggests that this entertainment aimed to please and to consolidate the existing order, not to query or challenge it.

Having listened to the first dialogue and been given her welcoming presents, the Queen moved on to the house where another offering awaited her. Before Elizabeth could enter the house of her host(s) she usually had to stop several times to listen to various speeches, receive gifts, or say a few words herself.⁷ On the steps of Harefield Place Elizabeth was met by Place and Time, and the domestic note of the entertainment is continued on a more elevated level. The two allegorical figures stress the humbleness and inadequacy of the house: Place is 'pretty' but 'little', 'private' but 'poor', 'obscure' and 'narrow'. The dialogue is simultaneously apologetic and complimentary. Elizabeth is compared to the sun, life-giving and dazzling. By implication, she is also identified with Cynthia, an image that will be taken up again in the course of the entertainment.

Place wears a 'parti-coloured robe, like the brick house', while Time is somewhat surprisingly dressed in green and has 'yellow hair'. The Poet at Elvetham is clad in green, 'to signify the joy of his thoughts at [the Queen's] entrance'.⁸ Time is

⁷ On arrival at Bisham in 1592, Elizabeth heard a speech by a Wild Man at the top of a hill, a dialogue between Pan and two Virgins in the middle of the hill, a ditty by Ceres and Nymphs in harvest carts at the foot of the hill, followed by yet another speech and a gift presentation.

⁸ Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1980), p. 102.

portrayed here not as Old Father Time, dressed in black and carrying a scythe, but is, as Place points out, 'gay, fresh, and cheerful'. He carries an hourglass that has been stopped:

P. Let me see, your wings are clipped, and, for aught I see, your hourglass runs not.

T. My wings are clipped indeed, and it is her hands has clipped them; and 'tis true, my glass runs not. Indeed it has been stopped a long time; it can never run as long as I wait upon this Mistress.

The Queen as unaffected by or even above time, is a recurring theme in the iconography of the late Elizabethan period. Walter Raleigh famously described Elizabeth thus:

Time wears her not, she doth his chariot guide,
Mortality below her orb is placed.⁹

In the Prologue of Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1600), the Sun, Moon and Stars envy Elizabeth her youth, immutability and brightness, and even in late portraits of the Queen the 'mask of youth' was almost universally applied.¹⁰

There is an interesting parallel between this dialogue and the ode *Of Cynthia* (almost certainly Davies's work), which suggests that this entertainment episode was written by Davies as well. The same juxtaposition of Cynthia and Time can be found in both passages, there is even a verbal echo. The Harefield text has:

T. I [am] her Time; and Time were very ungrateful, if it should not ever stand still, to serve and preserve, cherish and delight her, that is the glory of her time, and makes the Time happy wherein she lives.

Compared to that *Of Cynthia* reads:

⁹ Walter Oakshott, *The Queen and the Poet* (London: Faber, 1960), p. 148. Time also stood still during Elizabeth's stay at Kenilworth in 1575 because the clock on the clock tower had been stopped.

¹⁰ *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 3 vols, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), I, p. 114; for images of the Queen in her last years see Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), p. 49.

Lands and seas she rules below,
 Where things change, and ebbe, and flowe,
 Spring, waxe old and perish;
 Only Time which all doth mowe
 Her alone doth cherish.

Of Cynthia was printed in Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* (1602) with the caption 'This Song was sung before her sacred Majesty at a show on horseback, wherewith the Right Honourable the Earl of Cumberland presented Her Highness on May Day last'. The ode was presumably commissioned by the Earl of Cumberland, who was the Queen's Champion at the tilt, to be performed on May Day 1602 at Sir Richard Buckley's at Lewisham.¹¹ The two pageants took place within two months of each other, and they express similar ideas with very similar vocabulary.

The fiction that Elizabeth was impervious to time was an obvious way of complimenting an ageing monarch, but at the same time served as a reminder that, at nearly seventy, she might not have much time left. The depiction of Time as a less threatening figure, who can be controlled by the preternatural being that is the Queen, conforms with the continuous official denial that the Queen was getting older and only mortal. Egerton was toeing the official public relations line while simultaneously flattering her.

The end of the episode turns out to be an elaborate vehicle for the presentation of yet another gift, a diamond heart. Place assures the Queen that if she were as big as her owners' hearts, she could do justice to the great visitor. Time then spins a story about how the heart came into his possession: one of the Nymph had stolen it from one of the Queen's servants, but had realized that she was not entitled to it, and had

¹¹ Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (London: Philip, 1987), p. 150.

thrown it away. Another allegorical figure, Opportunity, had found it and handed it over to Time. This little story –somewhat laboriously– leads up to the presentation of the jewel but also helps underline the Egertons’ magnanimity and loyalty, and can be employed to pay another compliment to the Queen. She is ‘M[istres]s of all hearts in the world’ and therefore naturally the rightful owner of this particular heart. The Bailiff had already claimed in the first dialogue that Elizabeth ‘know[s] the way to all men’s hearts’. The jewel is handed over and the Queen is explicitly welcomed: ‘Time, Place, Persons, and all other circumstances do concur altogether in bidding her welcome.’

‘The Complaint of the Five Satyrs against the Nymphs’ introduces a piece of classical pastoral which does not seem to be linked with the other episodes. The tone, theme and characters of the device do not fit in with the rest of the domestic entertainment. Unlike all the other episodes, the Complaint does not involve the presentation of a gift. This, together with the fact that the episode has survived on a single, separate sheet, and seems to be in a hand slightly different from the rest of the five-page manuscript, could suggest that it was not a part of the original entertainment at all. The Reverend Ralph Churton, who transcribed the Newdegate manuscript in 1802, first voiced this suspicion, but I have not been able to verify this one way or other.¹²

Jean Wilson describes the episode as a ‘hackneyed piece’, and I am inclined to agree with her.¹³ If it was part of the entertainment, the show took place either on

¹² Quoted in John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols (London: Nichols & Son, 1823), III, p. 595, fn.2.

¹³ ‘The Harefield Entertainment’, 324.

the Saturday evening, or alternatively some time on Sunday. The Saturday, the day of the Queen's arrival, seems marginally more likely. After having listened to two dialogues and been given three presents, a brief show before or after dinner would have rounded off what must have been a tiring day, especially since Elizabeth had arrived in Harefield on horseback.

The Mariner's Lottery was the next show. It consists of three parts: a song, a short speech, and the lottery itself. The Mariner 'came into the presence' with a box under his arm that turns out to be a lottery box. His appearance in a pastoral entertainment may be surprising at first, but only until his song explains why he has come. 'Cynthia, Queen of seas and lands' had sent Fortune out to sea 'To try her Fortune every way', we are told. The Mariner had encountered Fortune at sea and she had shown herself generous and given him 'some toys'. The subsequent short speech spins out the story. It describes that the Mariner has made a vow not part with the gifts received from Fortune other than by fortune, that is through a lottery. He has carried his lots around with him for some time in the search for 'fit company'. Now that he has found 'the best company in the world' he wants to 'divide [his] booty among them', and encourages the ladies present to try their luck.

'The Lottery' itself consists of thirty-four rhyming couplets, each accompanying a lot. The prizes are mostly trinkets, objects taken from the domestic sphere that would presumably appeal to ladies, such as rings, a necklace, and a pair of bracelets. It seems that the outcome of the lottery was rigged to a certain extent, because the Queen, who was naturally the first to draw, won the best prize. Her couplet, which bears the captions 'Fortune's Wheels', reads:

Fortune must now no more on triumph ride,
The wheels are yours that did her chariot guide.

In the dialogue between Place and Time Elizabeth is depicted as the supernatural being who is able to control Time. In both the song 'Cynthia Queen of seas and lands' and in her couplet from the lottery, she is the goddess who commands fortune.¹⁴ This entertainment prefers to employ subtle compliments rather than the exaggerated eulogies customary on these occasions.

One manuscript gives the names of the ladies who drew the lots. These were the Queen, her ladies-in-waiting, and some country neighbours of the Egertons.¹⁵ The Percy transcript omits lots (xxii) 'A Snuffkin', and (xxiv) 'A Pair of Bracelets', but adds another four in their place. According to the transcript, three of the four lots were to be drawn by 'country wenches', the fourth was a blank and had 'no name' on it.¹⁶ If the Percy transcript is correct, its mention of the country wenches provides important evidence that this part of the entertainment was not an elite affair exclusively, but open to some ordinary (local) people. Similarly to the country dance at Cowdray in which Lord Montague and his wife chose to take part, and the water show of the second day of the Elvetham entertainment, the 'beautiful relation' between all classes is evoked in the mingling of all levels in the lottery at Harefield.

¹⁴ At this point we recall Frances Yates's statement that Astraea is affiliated with numerous other deities among whom is Fortune. See *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 32.

¹⁵ The names of the ladies are given in E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), IV, p. 67.

¹⁶ Published as 'Poetical Miscellanies', in *Early English Poetry, Ballads, and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages*, ed. J.O. Halliwell (London: Percy Society 15, 1845); usually referred to as 'Percy transcript/manuscript'.

The last two episodes took place on Monday, the day of the Queen's departure. The first device is entitled 'The humble petition of a Lady, delivered in writing upon the Monday morning, when the [robe] of rainbows was presented to the Q[ueen] by the La[dy] Walsingham'.¹⁷ This Petition opens with the kind of flowery compliments that were conventional on these occasions:

Beauty's rose and Virtue's book,
Angel's mind and angel's look,
To all saints and angels dear,
Clearest Majesty on earth,
Heaven did smile at your fair birth,
And since your days have been most clear.

Soon, however, this blatant flattery develops into a charming explanation of the gift of the robe of rainbows. Unusual as it may seem, it was not unheard of to present the Queen with a gown, either as a New Year's gift or during a progress entertainment. At Mitcham in September 1598, Sir Julius Caesar had given Elizabeth 'a gown of cloth of silver, richly embroidered, and a black network mantle with pure gold', and 'a taffeta hat with several flowers'.¹⁸ Egerton himself had presented Elizabeth with a costly gown during a visit in 1598, and had given her elaborately embroidered pieces of clothing on New Year's day 1600.¹⁹ The robe of rainbows handed over in the course of the Petition was mentioned in a contemporary letter by Sir George Savile:

In this Inclosed yo[u]r lo[rdship] maye see the manier of presentinge the gifte[s] w[hi]ch weare many. and great. The Iewell my lo[rd] keper presented was Richly worth 1000.^{li} as I was credibly told. Another Iewell said worth vj C.^{li} And the Gowne of Raynbows very Riche embradrid.' ²⁰

¹⁷ A reproduction of the 'Rainbow Portrait' can be found in Appendix II.

¹⁸ Leslie Hotson, *Queen Elizabeth's Entertainment at Mitcham* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 11.

¹⁹ On the presents from Egerton to Elizabeth see J. Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 570, fn. 1.

²⁰ Quoted in Mary Erler, 'The Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth', *MP*, 84 (1987), 363; Sir George Savile to the Earl of Shrewsbury, Nottinghamshire Record

The rainbow robe adroitly links the current wet summer with the folklore belief that rain on St. Swithin's day (15 July) will bring rainy weather for another forty days. The fairy-tale-like story of the petition explains that it is not St. Swithin who causes the rain but Iris, who came to his feast as 'an unbidden guest'. As St. Swithin does not want Elizabeth to get wet (we recall that she had to seek shelter under a tree to listen to the dialogue between Place and Time), he has asked Iris to 'go/Unto the Antipodes below'. When Iris refuses to comply, St. Swithin takes her 'rainy robe' away from her only to present it to Elizabeth:

It is fit it should with you remain,
For you know better how to rain'.

The robe and its accompanying poem associate Elizabeth with Iris, the rainbow goddess of the Rainbow Portrait. Frances Yates was the first to point out the possible connection between the portrait and Davies's poems.²¹ Roy Strong reaffirmed the connection between Davies's work and the iconography of the last years of Elizabeth's reign, and it was he who suggested that Robert Cecil's entertainment in December 1602 'evoked this extraordinary votive image' rather than the Harefield entertainment in the summer of that year.²² Janet Arnold, on the other hand, claims that the portrait may originate in Elizabeth's 'appearance at a masque ... when she visited Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, at Harefield Place in July 1602'.²³ Arnold's hypothesis that the rainbow robe goes back to the visit to Harefield is a distinct possibility, especially when we consider the extraordinary correlation between the portrait and the entertainment text.

Office, Savile Papers, MS DDSR 1/D/14, fol.26, 14 Aug. 1602.

²¹ *Astraea*, 'Appendices', pp. 215-21.

²² *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 52.

²³ *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (Leeds: Maney, 1988), p. 58.

In both entertainment and portrait Elizabeth is a deity superior to Iris. In the picture she holds, and therefore controls, the rainbow. The Latin motto 'Non sine sole Iris' ('Without the sun no rainbow') identifies Elizabeth with the sun, and her magnificent robe is orange, the colour of the sun.²⁴ The Queen had already been compared to the sun in the dialogue between Place and Time, and in Monday's Petition she is given Iris's robe in the hope that she will stop the rain, like the sun. The jewel Savile refers to in his letter may be the diamond heart given to Elizabeth by Place on her arrival. Like the device of the rainbow, the heart-shaped jewel is echoed in the painting. Elizabeth wears a ruby heart on her left sleeve. Both Yates and Strong suggest that the heart, held in the jaws of the serpent, represents the conjunction of wisdom and passion.²⁵ Finally, Elizabeth wears a crescent-shaped jewel in her headdress in the portrait while she is celebrated as Cynthia, the virgin goddess whose emblem is the crescent moon, in the Harefield entertainment.

The Rainbow Portrait conveys grandeur and magnificence-- Elizabeth is majestic. In the entertainment text a different picture evolves. Elizabeth finds herself in the company of Iris, who is a mere weather goddess, and St. Swithin, the rural rainmaker. Like the Bailiff and the Dairymaid, both these characters are suitable for a country welcome. When Iris's robe is bestowed on Elizabeth because she is a superior force, this act is couched in playful terms, punning on the homophones of 'rain/reign'. Thus even in giving this precious and unusual gift the gentle flattery

²⁴ Yates quotes part of a French incantatory song first printed in 1603 which reads, 'The radiant, all-animating, all-vivifying beautiful sun,/ Approaching the beautiful season,/ Whence comes summer,/ Wears the orange tint'; Cf. *Astraea*, p. 161.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 217; *The Cult of Elizabeth*, pp. 50-2.

and compliment, and the overall intimate quality of the entertainment are continued and preserved.

The final act was another speech by Place, this time dressed in black. This device had been used before to good effect at Elvetham in 1591. In both entertainments, the character that greets the Queen on her arrival also bids her farewell. Just as her arrival is said to bring joy, her imminent departure brings sorrow. Unlike Time, who will be able to go with the Queen, Place has to stay where she is. She will be 'forsaken and desolate'. Jean Wilson has suggested that this remark can be read as social commentary because most places in the country must have felt comparatively forsaken and desolate once the Queen and her large entourage had moved on like a swarm of locusts.

Place apologizes once again, this time for the bad weather that had forced Elizabeth to stay indoors during her sojourn at Harefield.²⁶ He puts the blame squarely on St. Swithin who has caused so much rain that Place has decided to give an anchor to the Queen. This anchor was another jewel and Elizabeth's farewell present. Traditionally, the anchor is a symbol of hope. Jean Wilson may be right in assuming that here it expresses hope of the Egertons for the Queen's continuing favour and also for her future.²⁷ The presentation of the jewel is accompanied by the valedictory wish that the Queen may 'in all places ... anchor as safely' as she does and will do 'in the hearts of my Owners'. The wish for the Queen's long life and happiness or

²⁶ Jean Wilson has pointed out that, probably due to the bad summer, the shows were suitable to be performed either indoors or outside; cf. 'The Harefield Entertainment', 327.

²⁷ 'The Harefield Entertainment', 325.

speedy return to the place she is about to leave is a traditional device at the end of an entertainment. However, here the valediction also alludes to Place's earlier assertion that if she were as large as her owners' hearts, she would be 'the fairest palace in the world'. Following her first speech, Place had presented Elizabeth with the diamond heart. Thus, this is a subtle reminder of Elizabeth's precious welcoming present. Egerton was determined not to pass up the chance of portraying himself as a generous host.

The three-day entertainment cost the Lord Keeper an enormous amount of money. According to the accounts, the sum total amounted to £2013.18s.4d., of which £1255.12s.0d. were spent on provisions and £199.9s.11d. on building work in and around the house. The balance was apparently used for gifts and shows. We have no evidence that Egerton applied for reimbursement from the royal Cofferer to which he would have been entitled, and the Lord Keeper seems to have been content to spend that much on a pastoral entertainment for the Queen.

The summer progress itself was a form of pastoral, as Louis Montrose has remarked:

If the progress had the pastoral function of periodically renewing court and monarch by immersion in things healthy and natural, simple and traditional, it was also eminently pastoral in that it insinuated and glanced at matters greater than rustic bride-ales and mythological fantasies. It was a paradoxical fusion of *otium* and *negotium*, holiday and policy.²⁸

The Harefield entertainment does not seem to have 'greater matters' at heart. It seems surprisingly straightforward in its mixture of rather conventional royal

²⁸ Louis A. Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepheardes", and the Pastoral of Power', in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 50.

compliment and pastoral comedy. Even the world of this comedy is one of the rustic here-and-now rather than of Arcadia. Unlike the Sudeley entertainment of 1592 which created a complex and hyperbolic role for the Queen, and a simple, collective, and idealized relationship between the Queen and her subjects for those subjects, Harefield succeeds merely in fulfilling the latter function. Harefield offers nothing genuinely new, but produces variations on well-known themes.

Having said that, it is obvious that the Harefield entertainment followed an agenda very different from that of the pageants at both Cowdray and Elvetham. Here the royal visitor and host play their parts in a drama of reciprocal continual courtship, display and conciliation. Discontent, if it existed, is silenced and suppressed. No negotiations for power are being conducted here, and neither the Queen nor her host seem to feel the urge to assert themselves. Elizabeth is the pinnacle of society and her role is not only not challenged but positively reinforced via the entertainment. This version of pastoral affirms the benign relationship of mutual interest between the Queen and the lowly, between the Queen and the great, amongst them all.

CONCLUSION

*Here our play has ending.
(Pericles, V.iii. 102)*

The thesis has attempted to show that Elizabethan progress entertainments were more than conservative exercises. They set out to achieve objectives beyond the creation and preservation of the 'beautiful relation' amongst all classes of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century English society.

It would be simplistic to assume that entertainments functioned on a single level of signification. On closer examination we will find, more often than not, that the representational surface does not match the underlying realities of an entertainment. The investigations into the Cowdray and Elvetham fetes in particular have shown that these pageants are far more complex than superficial study might reveal. Different participants in these 'social dramas', as Louis Montrose has called them, wanted different things out of them. Their motives are manifold and not always easy to ascertain. The Queen may have decided to visit a certain aristocrat as a sign of her favour, or, on the contrary, may have distrusted him and intended to use the occasion to check up on him and the locality. On a more mundane level, a particular house may have been chosen because it was conveniently situated between two stops on the royal itinerary. The hosts on these occasions would have had their own agendas. They might have wanted to flatter the Queen by staging an expensive and elaborate entertainment in the hope of advancement or in an attempt to (re)gain her favour. On the other hand, an entertainment offered the opportunity to display one's power and wealth in front the sovereign, one's peers, and retainers. A well-received

entertainment would have enhanced a man's honour and strengthened his position in negotiations for power with the Queen.

If we approach entertainments individually, not monolithically; historically, not generically, we will invariably discover possible alternative interpretations. The multiple layers of representation that scholars like Frances Yates and Roy Strong have revealed in so many of the portraits of Queen Elizabeth can be found in the majority of progress entertainments as well, if one is prepared to look.

If we dissociate ourselves from the idea that an entertainment had one major objective, and instead were to espouse the notion that there can be several, sometimes apparently contradictory, motivations at work, we will get a lot closer to the way these entertainments were originally designed and functioned. This should also help us to understand better the way Renaissance audiences, at different layers within society, might have construed them.

APPENDIX I

THE ELIZABETHAN DISCOURSE OF TREASON

Complots of mischief, treason, villanies
(Titus Andronicus, V.i.64)

It has been recognized for some time that the hitherto predominant view of the Elizabethan period as encapsulated in E.M.W. Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* presents a mythographic vision of orderliness that can no longer be upheld.¹ Curtis Bright has recently criticized the New Historicists' supposedly alternative view of the Elizabethan order as equally mythographic.²

Numerous examples can be quoted to support this criticism. Stephen Greenblatt, for example, describes Queen Elizabeth as 'a ruler without a standing army, without a highly developed bureaucracy, without an extensive police force, a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon enemies of that glory.'³ Louis Montrose remarks, along similar lines, that 'from [Elizabeth's] itinerant court emanated an aura of splendour and an illusion of power that far belied the limits of her government's police power, administrative efficiency, and her fiscal resources.'⁴ And Christopher Haigh states categorically, 'The metaphor of drama is an appropriate one for Elizabeth's reign, for her power was an illusion -- and an illusion was her power.'⁵ Other scholars stress that whatever power the Queen possessed was conferred upon her by her subjects. Thus Leonard Tennenhouse affirms that '[the Renaissance state's]

¹ (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

² *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama in the Elizabethan Era* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 5ff.

³ *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 64.

⁴ "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes", and the Pastoral of Power', *ELR*, 10 (1980), 169.

⁵ *Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 172.

totalitarian government depended largely on the subject's willingness to submit to the monarch.'⁶

The Queen is portrayed as either powerless or dependent for power on her subjects. Power is conceived theatrically because most New Historicists investigate primarily the theatre and elite ceremonies. Greenblatt and others are right in pointing out the theatricality of the many displays of state power. However, this formulation fails to grasp the recognizable modern forms of Renaissance coercion.

The Elizabethan regime had an established, surprisingly well-functioning secret service. As evidence of its operation we can consult a document in the Public Records Office entitled 'The general state of Sussex'. It is a focused intelligence report, organized in the four columns 'Noblemen', 'Gentelmen', 'people', and 'Particulars' (for additional comments).⁷ In his report the government agent states that five noblemen are too many for one shire, 'specially if ill affected. or doubted. & agreeing all together. & having often meetings'. However, he sees a solution to the problem:

If it might be to remove soom of them into other shires whear they ar not native or landed & should have less authoritie. Otherwise if they bee in Commissions for honours sake alwayes to ioign with them soom other contrary of the chief gentelmen that ar sure to the state & religion.

According to the document, the richest gentlemen were 'ill affected', and the 'people' included few 'Free holders', and were thus dependent on their social superiors and 'ar easier carried away specially the countrey generally beeing ignoraunt & ungrounded in religion'. The most important 'particular' mentioned is

⁶ *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 51-2.

⁷ PRO, SP 12/165/22.

that the most and best armour is held by people who 'should rather be unarmed'.⁸ The government should break up the local Catholics' monopolization on weaponry, the agent recommends.

Another seemingly minor document shows Cecilian *realpolitik* at work. On 20 April 1570 Sir Frances Englefield, a leading Catholic exile, wrote to the Duchess of Feria that

Lords Arundel and Montague are put out of lieutenancy of Sussex, and Mr West, created Lord Delawarr, and Lord Sackville put in. This accounts for the report that Lord Montague was fled, some say these affronts are done him to make him fly, or do something to bring him to infamy.⁹

Breight underlines the final point of Englefield's analysis:

Montague ... was not merely humiliated by removal from the lieutenancy: he was thereby encouraged to cultivate anxiety and perhaps even paranoia about his social-political position. Quite simply, he was pushed to do something stupid that would disclose complicity in the Rebellion and /or justify additional persecution.¹⁰

Documents dealing with the Northern Rebellion reveal an almost simplistic pattern of provoking suspected aristocrats. Thus Norfolk, Westmoreland and Dacre were each provoked into doing 'something stupid', and ultimately eliminated.

A vast 'discourse of treason' became the central government response to the difficult social problems of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean London.¹¹ An oppositional discourse emerged in answer to it. It was not simply enough to dispatch a particular "traitor", but it became useful for the state to develop a vocabulary of

⁸ C.C. Breight, *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama*, p. 48.

⁹ CSPD, VII, 286.

¹⁰ *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama*, pp. 200-1.

¹¹ This term has been borrowed from C.C. Breight's article, "Treason doth never prosper": *The Tempest* and the Elizabethan Discourse of Treason', *ShQ*, 41 (1990), 3.

treason that was to complement the spectacle of public execution. This official discourse was frequently contested by oppositional voices. Oppositional discourse, which seems to commence only in the 1580s in response to increased government pressure, is necessarily less prominent than the official discourse because of domestic censorship and an intelligence network that frequently succeeded in stemming the influx of so-called “seditious” literature from abroad.

The discourse of treason is central to the thirty-year period starting in 1580, when English Catholics evolved from quiet dissent to active threat, due to the influx of Jesuits and seminary priests. That was at least the government’s perception and, therefore, presumably the public view of the situation. The harsh statutes of 1581 and 1585 against priests and their abettors, enhanced by such drastic measures as the 1584 Bond of Association, helped to create a climate in which Catholic activities were construed as a conspiracy, regardless of whether a given “treasonous” plot was real, imagined, or even provoked by the government.

From a government perspective, there was a fortuitous coincidence between the official crackdown on English Catholics starting in the 1580s and a series of plots to assassinate the Queen (Throckmorton 1583, Babington 1585, Stafford 1587, Lopez in 1594). In striking contrast to the official propaganda about Catholic “traitors”, even Sir John Harrington, Elizabeth’s godson, wondered ‘which was first ... whether ... [Catholics’] sinister practises drewe on these rigorous laws, or whether the rigour of these lawes moved them to these unnaturall practises.’¹² Harrington’s reflections on cause and effect are far more complex than the official, very simplistic, model of

¹² *A Tract on the Succession to the Crown*, ed. C.R. Markham (London: Nichols, 1880), p. 104.

declaring all priests, and the people who were prepared to help them, automatically traitors in the legislation of 1581 and 1585.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the period between the mid-1580s and the first decade of the seventeenth century was troubled by economic crises, political crises, social tension, and popular disorder. Not coincidentally, the same period saw a comparatively large number of treason cases and the most extensive engagement in conspiratorial discourse in Early Modern English history.

At this point I wish to examine a prominent conspiracy by ‘three fanatical preachers Hacket, Arthington, and Coppinger’ that immediately preceded the Queen’s summer progress of 1591.¹³ This conspiracy was staged on 16 July, and its objective was the dismantling of the Anglican Church, the deposition of Elizabeth, and removal of some privy councillors. However, it was swiftly and severely crushed, and ten days later one of the preachers involved, William Hacket, was tried and condemned as a traitor. He was hanged, drawn and quartered in public on 28 July.

The discovery of this conspiracy facilitated contemporary attacks on radical Protestantism by both the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Keith Thomas has pointed out that ‘usually the government dismissed such prophets as “brainsick” or “frantic”’.¹⁴ These people would be punished, but not too severely. They were

¹³ *The Elizabethan Journals, Being a Record of Those Things Most Talked of During The Years 1591-1603*, ed. G.B. Harrison (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).

¹⁴ *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp. 133ff.

certainly not executed. Unfortunately for Hacket, the regime was unrelenting in his case.

Apparently, the prime mover in the conspiracy was Edmund Copinger, a gentleman and servant of the Queen. The second man involved was Copinger's friend, Henry Arthington. After unsuccessful attempts to wield some influence through letters to powerful people, Arthington and Copinger staged a somewhat bizarre procession through Cheapside that was punctuated by calls for repentance and criticism of the Elizabethan regime. The two gentlemen were imprisoned, but Hacket was the one to be tortured, tried, condemned and executed in quick succession. Copinger died under mysterious circumstances in Bridewell prison the day after Hacket's execution. Arthington survived and was eventually released after writing a submissive pamphlet. The regime did not miss this excellent opportunity to exploit this event for the purposes of anti-Presbyterian propaganda.

Hacket was convicted of treason mainly because he had confessed to defacing the royal arms, putting out the eyes of the lion and the dragon, and thereby denying Elizabeth's sovereignty. He had also pricked a bodkin into the Queen's picture, where the heart would have been. This was taken to indicate the desire to murder the Queen, a charge to which he pled not guilty, however. The main offences of which Hacket was found guilty were essentially attacks on official modes of representation. His defacing of the royal arms touched a raw nerve that had already been frayed a few months earlier.

On 25 March 1591 another symbolic attack had taken place in Sussex. A letter from the Privy Council directs local officials to investigate a 'great disturbance' committed by 140 people, wherein 'her Majestie's armes [were] torne and pulled downe'.¹⁵ The letter demands punishment for the culprits, but it remains unclear whether the regime was more disturbed by the 'disturbance' or the attack on the royal arms. However, it does reveal the government's acute sensitivity to symbolic challenges.

Breight views this event as 'not simply a matter of subversion' but 'a subtle form of counter-ceremony'.¹⁶ The defacing the royal arms equalled the attempt to negate a symbol that not only pervaded Elizabethan culture but that was also a feature of the spectacles of state in the later decades of Elizabeth's reign. Roy Strong informs us that the ceremonies for St. George's Day, and the Garter procession in particular, featured a display of the royal arms. In the 1590s these occasions were so popular that they attracted large crowds.¹⁷ Unfortunately, no Privy Council record of the outcome of the investigation in Sussex exists, which could suggest that the perpetrators in Sussex went unpunished. Hacket may therefore have been punished so severely because the others got away with it. The government may well have decided to make an example of Hacket as a warning to others in Sussex or anywhere else.¹⁸

¹⁵ *APC*, 1591, 4.

¹⁶ 'Duelling Ceremonies: The Strange Case of William Hacket, Elizabethan Messiah', *JMRS*, 19 (1989), 56.

¹⁷ *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 172-3.

¹⁸ 'Duelling Ceremonies', 56f.

Hacket's trial was followed by a public execution which was carefully stage-managed. Nothing was left to chance. The execution seems to have been timed so that it would parallel exactly the time when on 16 July Arthington and Copinger had passed through the streets. The gibbet was erected near the spot where they had mounted their cart. The order concerning time and location came directly from the Privy Council, thus the execution was symbolically orchestrated right from the apex of the hierarchy.¹⁹ Presumably the crowd witnessing the execution would have been similar to or almost the same as those who had seen the uprising, plus those who enjoyed a public execution as a form of free entertainment.

Machiavelli suggests that 'many believe that when he has the chance an able prince should cunningly foster some opposition to himself so that by overcoming it he can enhance his own stature.'²⁰ Three years after Hacket, Dr Roderigo Lopez was executed on what appear to be dubious charges. For writers like Robert Southwell, the Hacket case presented a perfect ideological opportunity to disseminate the notion that Elizabeth had far more to fear from radical Protestants than from Catholics.²¹ According to John Neale, Elizabeth had come to view the Protestant left and the Catholic right as equally threatening by 1593.²² The Hacket affair failed to facilitate the government's case against the leaders of Presbyterianism because treason could not be proved. The regime was becoming increasingly anxious, and therefore could not tolerate prophets any more:

The uprising was a wonderful opportunity to disseminate a larger message concerning the uses of performance: the dismemberment of William Hacket, the

¹⁹ *APC*, 1591, 325-6.

²⁰ *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 117.

²¹ *An Humble Supplication to her Maiestie*, ed. R.C. Bald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 26-7, 41.

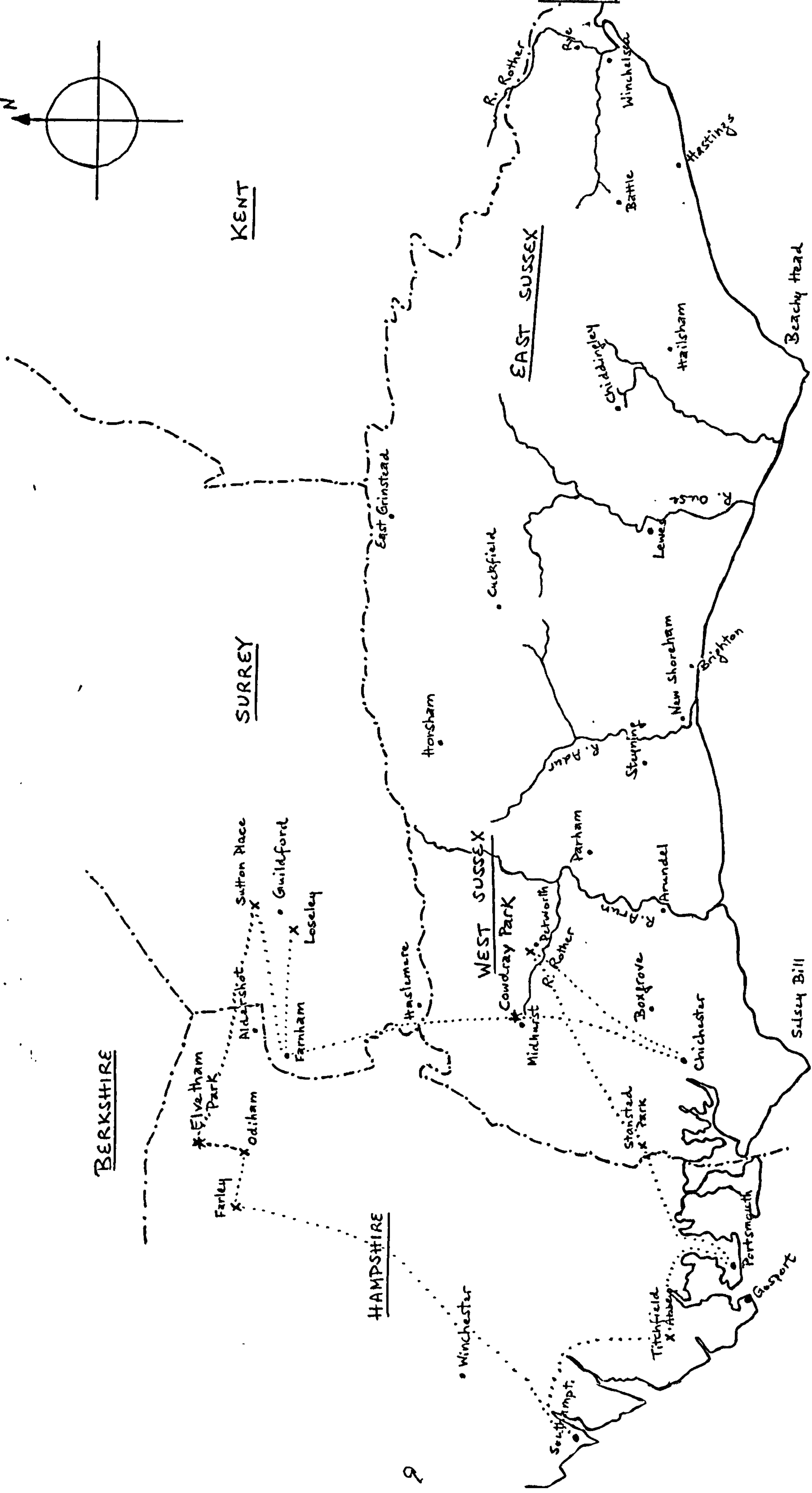
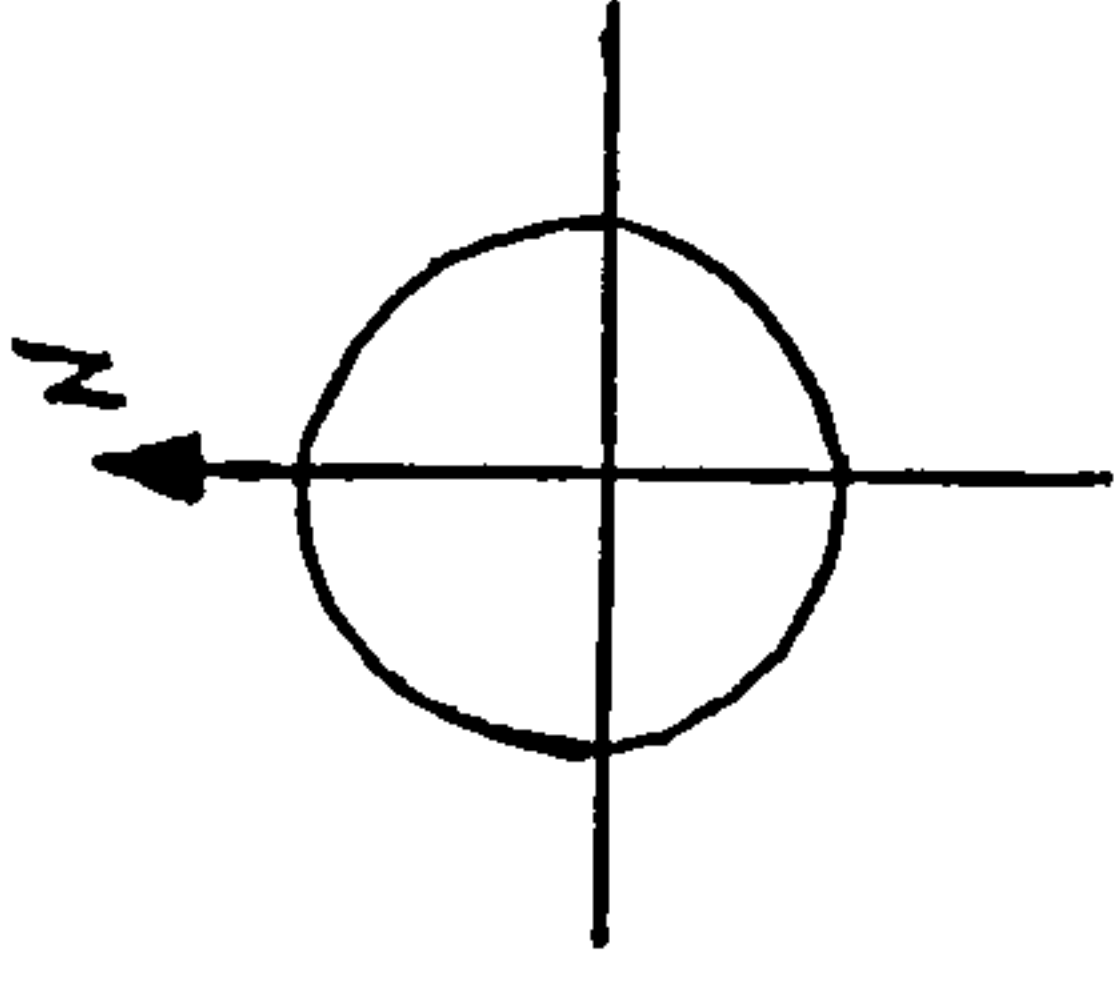
²² *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1584-1601* (London: Cape, 1957), p. 287.

convenient death of Edmund Copinger, the (as yet) ongoing imprisonment of Henry Arthington informed the Elizabethan subject that reform of the established order was unnecessary, and that anyone seeking to perform was entering a dangerous political arena.²³

It was against this background that the Cowdray entertainment, and only a month later, the fete at Elvetham took place. Both entertainments represent performances that were potentially challenging, or at least querying the existing order, and both hosts seem to have been looking for modifications in this order that would ultimately benefit them.

²³ C.C. Breight, *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama*, p. 67.

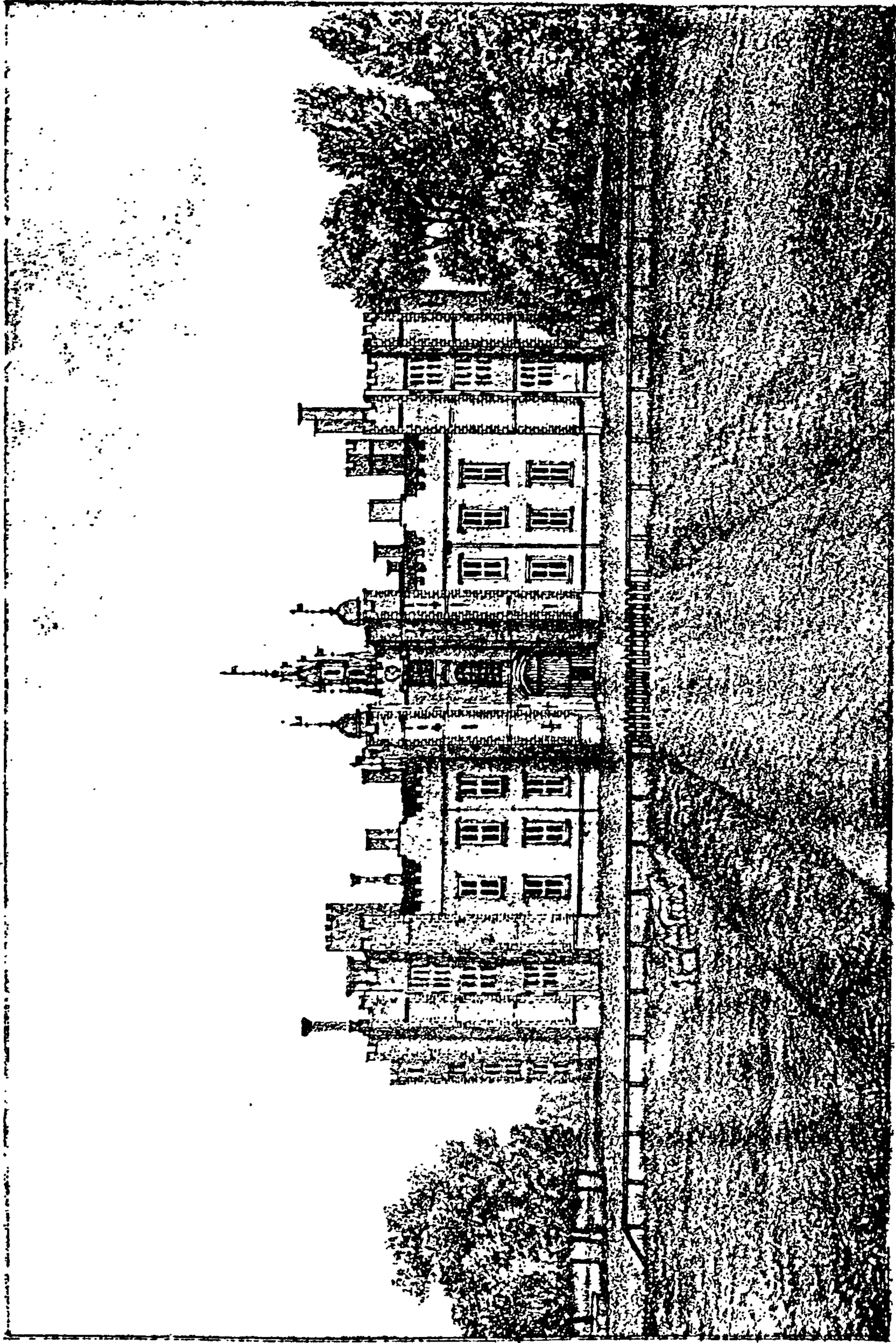
APPENDIX II



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Scale of miles

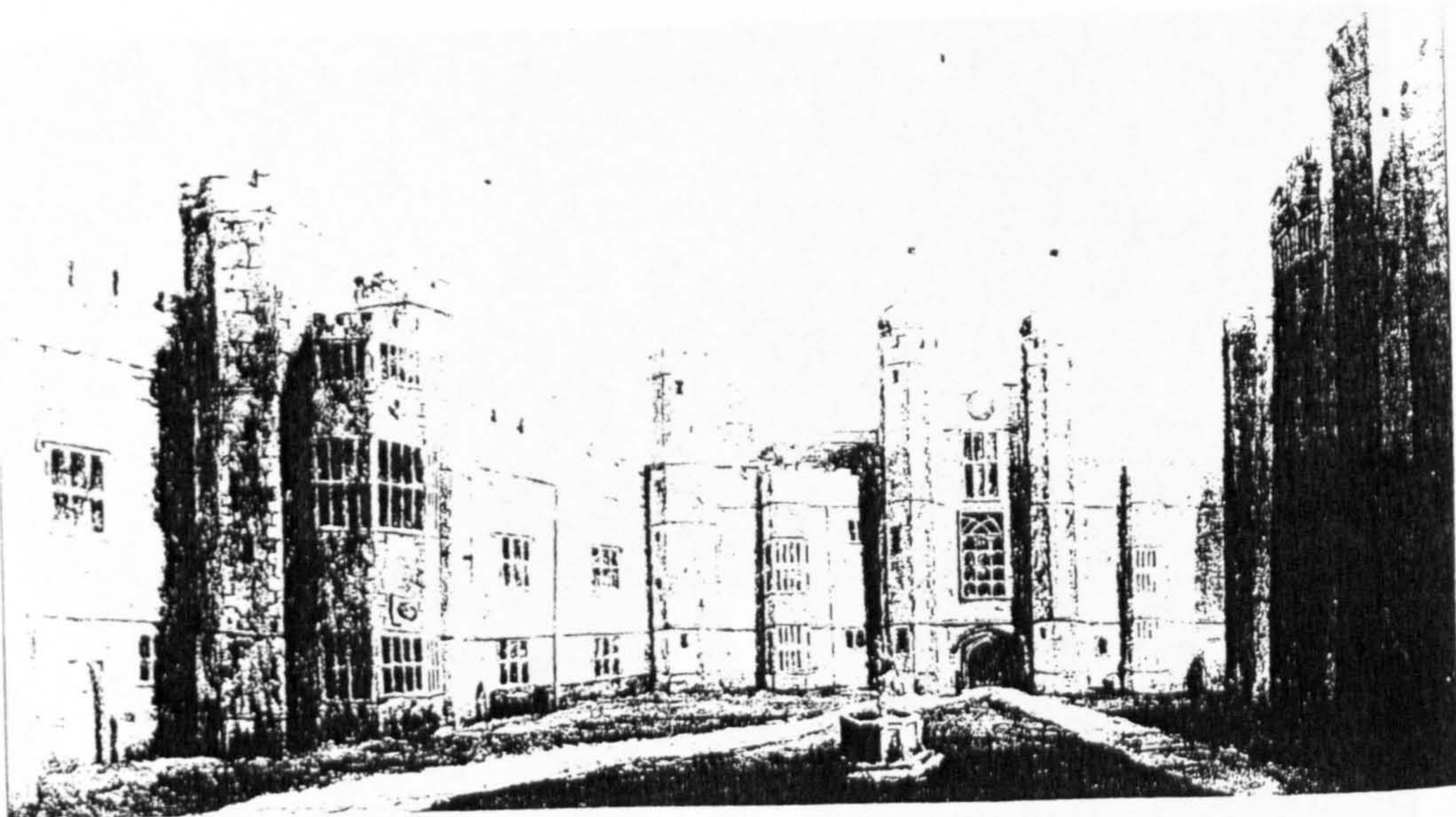
THE PROGRESS OF 1591 (INCLUDING THE VISITS TO COWDRAY AND ELVETHAM)



G. J. Ward del.

Printed by Simmons

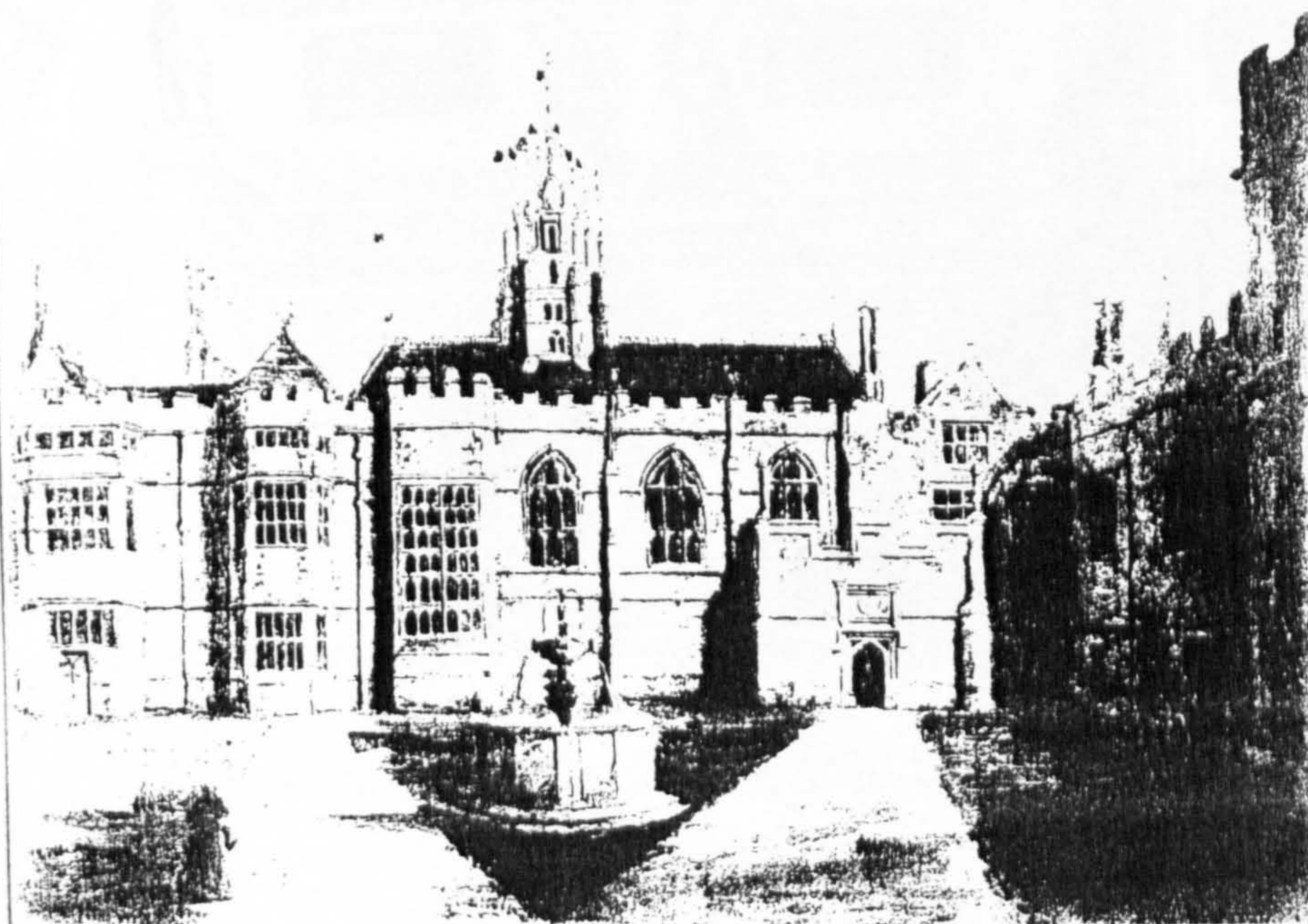
ILLUSTRATION 1: COWDRAY PARK (from J. Nichols, Progresses, III, p. 80)



THE QUADRANGLE. SHOWING THE GATEWAY & THE SOUTH GALLERY.

(Grimm)

ILLUSTRATIONS 2 AND 3 : COWDRAY - COURTYARD
(WATERCOLOURS)



THE QUADRANGLE. EASTERN SIDE.

(Grimm)

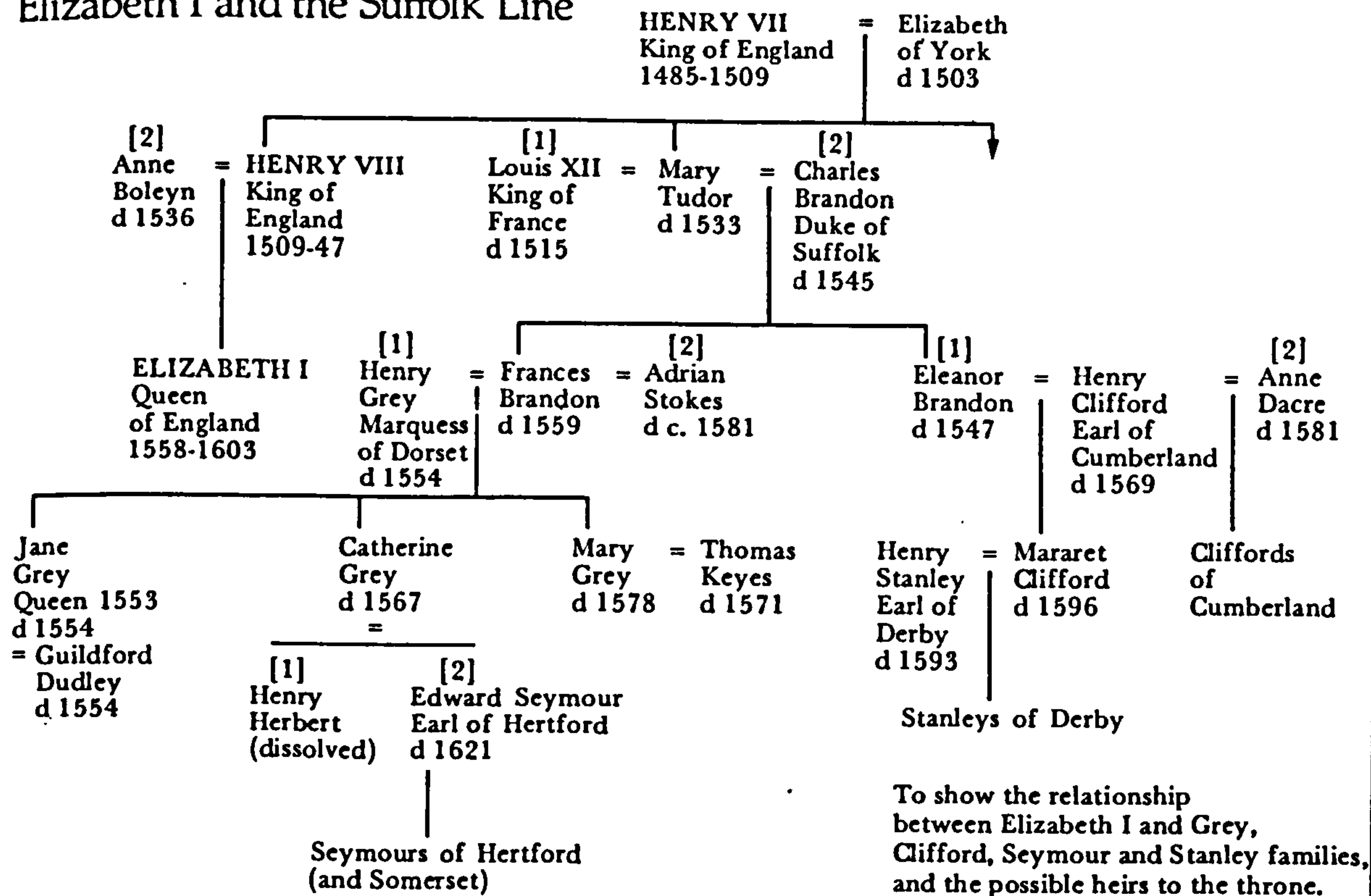


THE BUCK HALL
(Grimm)

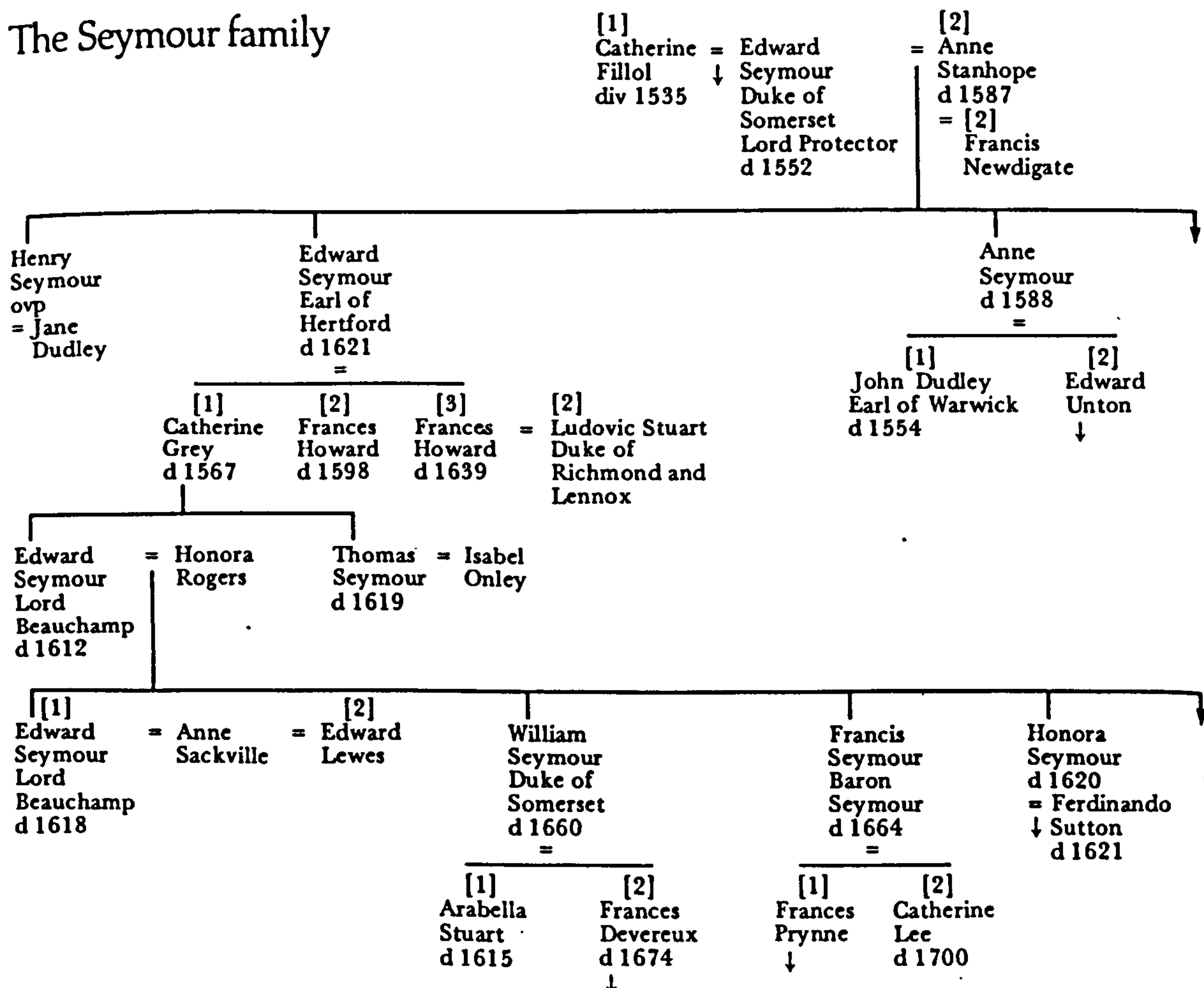
ILLUSTRATION 4: COWDRAY - THE BUCK HALL

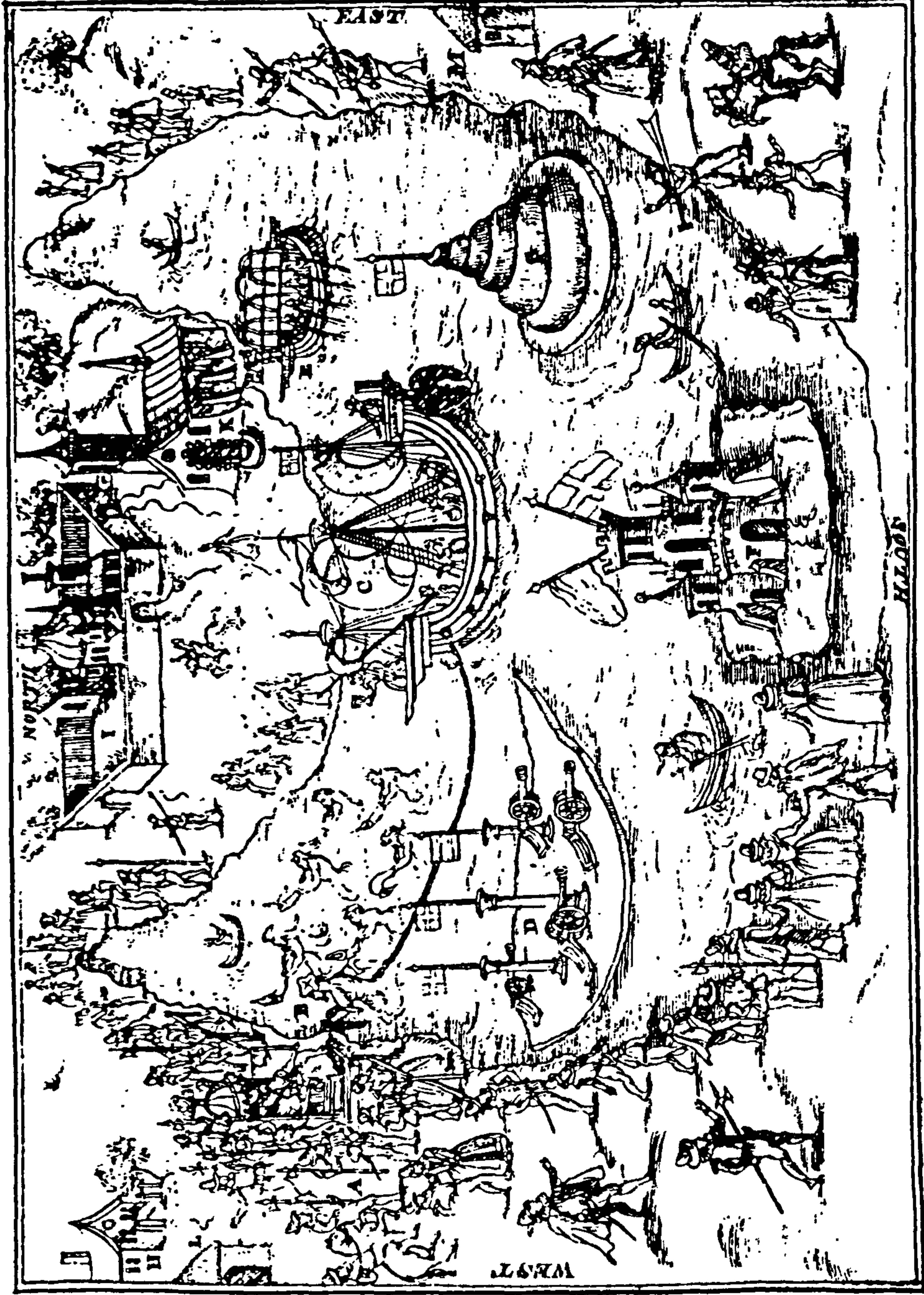
THE HERTFORDS AND THE SUCCESSION

Elizabeth I and the Suffolk Line



The Seymour family





The Entertainment at Elvetham 1591

ILLUSTRATION 5: ELVETHAM - THE CRESCENT-SHAPE LAKE

HERTFORD.

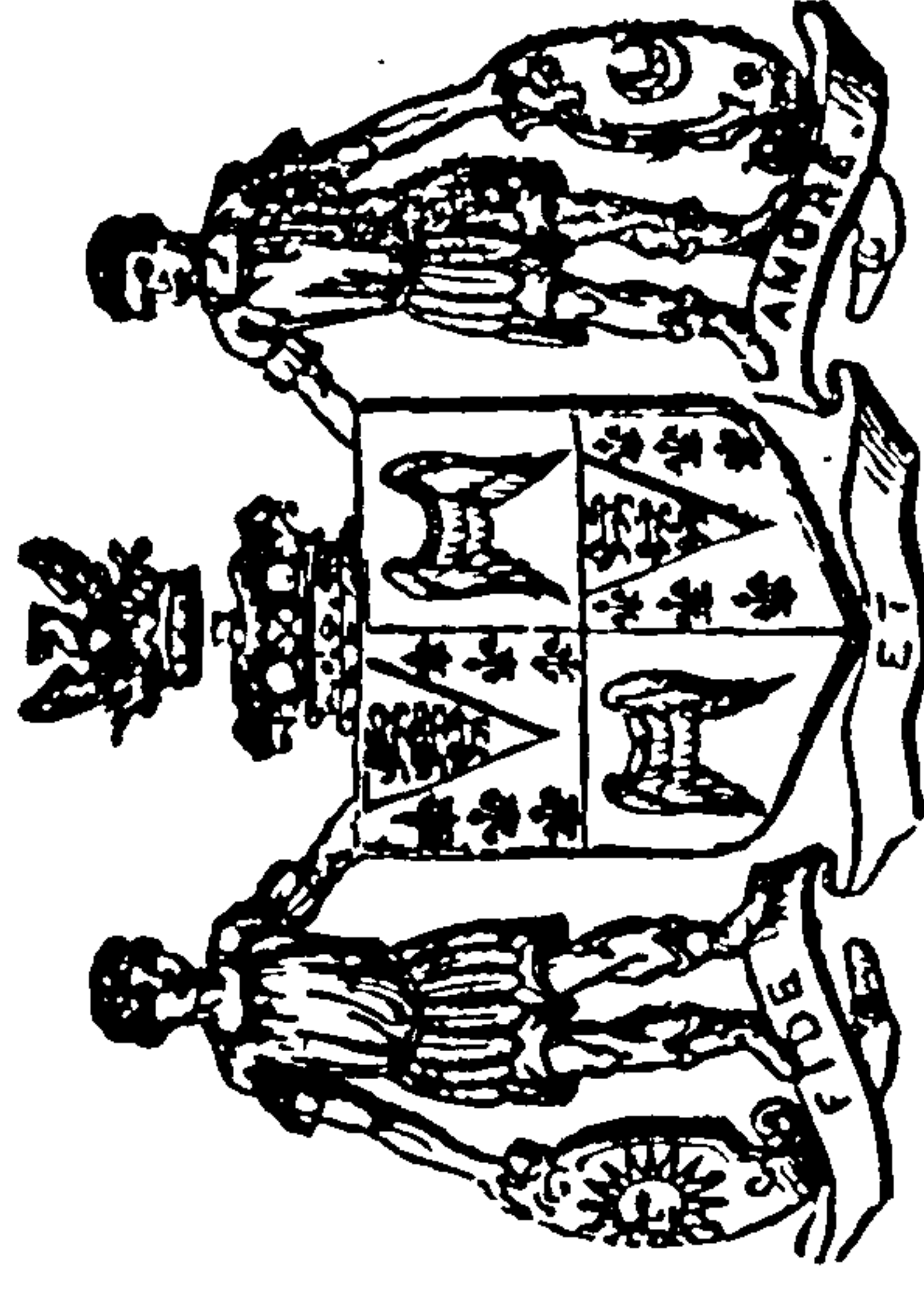


ILLUSTRATION 6:

THE HERTFORD COAT OF ARMS



NON SINE SOLE
IRIS

ILLUSTRATION T: THE RAINBOW PORTRAIT

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(London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1996).

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